The One Ring™
Roleplaying Game

The Laughter of Dragons™

Fantasy Roleplaying in the World of The Hobbit™ and The Lord of the Rings™

Based on the novels by J.R.R. Tolkien

- CREDITS -

Written by John Arcadian, Paul Butler, Gareth Hanrahan, Jon Hodgson, Andrew Kenrick, T.S. Luikart, Paul Mitchener, Francesco Nepitello, Jacob Rodgers, James Semple, John Semple and Graham Spearing
***The One Ring* rules designed by** Francesco Nepitello and Marco Maggi
Additional Rules Development by Amado Angulo

Art Director: Jon Hodgson
Cover Art by Sam Manley
Art by Jon Hodgson, Sam Manley, Jan Pospíšil and Scott Purdy
Editors: Jon Hodgson, Andrew Kenrick, T.S. Luikart and Francesco Nepitello
Graphic Design and Layout: Paul Bourne
Line Development Team: Jon Hodgson, Robert Hyde, Dominic McDowall and Francesco Nepitello
Publisher: Dominic McDowall
Proofreaders: David Rea, Jacob Rodgers, James Semple and Michele Garbuggio

Published by Sophisticated Games Ltd, 3 Andersen Court, Newnham Road, Cambridge CB3 9EZ, UK and Cubicle 7 Entertainment Ltd, Suite D3, Unit 4, Gemini House, Hargreaves Road, Groundwell Industrial Estate, Swindon, SN25 5AZ, UK

© Sophisticated Games 2018 © Cubicle 7 Entertainment 2018

The One Ring, Middle-earth, The Hobbit, The Lord of the Rings, and the characters, items, events and places therein are trademarks or registered trademarks of The Saul Zaentz Company d/b/a Middle-earth Enterprises and are used under license by Sophisticated Games Ltd and their respective licensees.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publishers.

Printed in Lithuania

~ contents ~

Introduction 4
How to Use this Guide 5
The Passing of Years 6

The Silver Needle 7
Adventuring Phase 7
Part One - At the Traders Gate 7
Part Two - Searching the Roads 13
Part Three - Thieves in Dale 16
Part Four - The Bandit's Lair 19
Epilogue 23

Of Hammers and Anvils 24
Adventuring Phase 24
Part One - Like the Falling of Small Stones 25
Part Two - A Grim Toy-market 27
Part Three - Uphill and Down Dale 29
Part Four - An Interested Lord 35
Part Five - In Deep Places 38
Part Six - Treachery & Wisdom 41
Epilogue 42

To Dungeons Deep 43
Adventuring Phase 43
Part One - At the Court of the Grieving King 45
Part Two - To the Grey Mountains Narrow 48
Part Three - Hunters in the Waste 49
Part Four - The Mausoleum 54
Part Five - Wings of Iron 58
Part Six - Clouds Gather, Again 59
Epilogue 63

Sleeping Dragons Lie 64
Adventuring Phase 64
Part One - Smoke on the Horizon 65
Part Two - On Dragons 68
Part Three - The Shadow of his Wings 72
Part Four - Across the New Desolation 79
Part Five - Approaching the Watchtower 85
Part Six - By Stealth and Guile 89
Part Seven - Slaying The Dragon 93
Epilogue 95

Dark Waters 96
Adventuring Phase 96
Part One - At the Sign of the Pike and Eel 97
Part Two - The Apprentice 101
Part Three - Tales, Secrets and Lies 104
Part Four - The Guild of Artisans 106
Part Five - Elf-stones and Dwarven Gold 109
Part Six - Whispers in the Dark 111
Part Seven - Flotsam and Jetsam 114
Epilogue - The Past is Never That 117

Shadows in the North 118
Adventuring Phase 118
Part One - Expected Visitors 118
Part Two - The Vale of Bones 120
Part Three - A Warm Welcome 127
Part Four - The City of Bells 134
Part Five - Inside Information 139
Part Six - The Concert of Kings 141
Part Seven - Flight into the Mountain 143
Epilogue 149

Appendix 152
The Sorcerer of Forod 152
More Nazgûl 154
Special Abilities of the Ringwraiths 155

Index 157

- Introduction -

Then Smaug really did laugh... "Revenge!" he snorted, and the light of his eyes lit the hall from floor to ceiling like scarlet lightning. "Revenge! The King under the Mountain is dead and where are his kin that dare seek revenge? Girion Lord of Dale is dead... where are his sons' sons that dare approach me?"

This supplement presents six ready-to-play adventures for your company of heroes, complete scenarios that concern both the Dwarves of Erebor and the Men of Dale. They can be played separately, or as a series of connected adventures set in the years after 2956 and taking place in and around the Lonely Mountain. These adventures draw on the setting information contained in *Erebor*, and, while that supplement is not strictly necessary for the enjoyment of *The Laughter of Dragons*, a Loremaster will find a great deal of useful material in that volume that is not repeated here.

With the death of Smaug and the return of hope to the region, Sauron's plans to bring Dragon-fire and savage swords in Wilderland have been momentarily foiled. Thwarted and enraged by Gandalf's scheming, the Lord of Mordor has ordered another one of his Ringwraiths to leave Minas Morgul and travel to Rhovanion to plunge the North in a state of ruin.

This time, Sauron's chosen agent will act with subtlety: enthralling Men and perverting the desire of Dwarves and Elves so that their own deeds will further the will of the Dark Tower.

Here below follow the summary of the six adventures presented in the supplement.

The Silver Needle

A mysterious Bandit-lord known by the name of Longo wants to steal a wondrous artefact in Dale. The adventurers become involved to stop the bandits and run afoul of Orcs in the marshes and in Dale itself. The first hints at a conspiracy are encountered.

Of Hammers and Anvils

The company rescues the famed Dwarf Balin and helps him to investigate a number of troubling events in Dale. A plan attempting to mar the peace of Erebor is uncovered, and sabotage must be avoided.

To Dungeons Deep

The discovery of a long-lost heirloom of the House of Girion threatens to sow mistrust between the crowns of Erebor and Dale. Wisdom is required to prevent old grudges from resurfacing.

Sleeping Dragons Lie

In the Withered Heath, someone, or something, has kindled the wrath of a Dragon, and the great monster threatens to unleash his fury on the Dalelands. The companions travel to the peak of Zirakinbar, in a desperate attempt to spare Erebor from certain destruction.

Dark Waters

The companions are in Esgaroth for the upcoming annual celebrations of Dragontide. They have come to see the presentation of the bronze statue of King Bard, but soon become entangled in a web of revenge, secrets and lies.

Shadows in the North

When Balin warns of a threat to both Mountain and City, he does not realise that traitorous forces manipulate him. The heroes must rely on subtlety and the bonds of friendship to win their freedom. Then they must confront the greatest servants of the Enemy to prevent war from destroying Dale and the Mountain.

How to Use This Guide

Even if each quest presented in this supplement is played as a stand-alone adventure, a wider tale is told between the lines. The bond tying Dáin and Bard and their cities is being tested by a treacherous plan set in motion by the Dark Lord. Minions of Sauron are working behind the scenes to sow strife and discord, twisting the will of mortals and using them to strike unseen from the shadows.

The following descriptions present the main personalities that appear in several of the adventures presented in this volume, representing the main cast of characters working for or against the dark conspiracy threatening the unity of the northern kingdoms.

The Sorcerer of Forod

The great schemer behind the majority of the plots presented in this supplement is the Sorcerer of Forod, one of the nine Nazgûl. Known of old among the Elves as Morlach, the Black Flame, he was once a wise and noble man among the Northmen of Rhovanion, whose spirit was ensnared by the Dark Lord with promises of endless knowledge. Sauron eventually gave him a ring of power, enabling him to wield great sorcery, but condemning him to fade and eventually become a bodiless wraith. When the Sorcerer finally shed his mortal raiment and became one of the Ringwraiths, Sauron unleashed him against the North. Some say that it is due to his malevolence that the Dragons of the Northern Wastes were roused and made to attack the Dwarves of the Grey Mountains.

Now, the Sorcerer of Forod has been sent back to the North by his Master. The Ringwraith knows the lands and the people of Rhovanion very well, and he intends to employ this lore to sow discontent and strife slowly over many years. When the bonds between the free folk of the North have been weakened to the breaking point, a direct strike will have maximum efficacy. A simple attempt at the lives

of Bard or Dáin will not do: The rising spirit of hope in the region must be broken, and its people made ready for the dominion of Mordor when that time comes.

In most of the adventures the actions of the Sorcerer of Forod occur behind the scenes, without the companions being able to encounter the Nazgûl face to face. In the final adventure — **Shadows in the North**, the deeds of the Player-heroes will force the hand of the Ringwraith, and he will reveal himself in a desperate bid to topple the throne of Erebor. (See the Appendix on page 152 for the characteristics of the Sorcerer of Forod).

Hakon and Jofur

Hakon and Jofur appear in *The Laughter of Dragons* as two powerful courtiers who are helping King Bard in his day-to-day activities, often taking his place in official gatherings and ceremonies, when, starting from the year 2957, the mood of the King starts keeping him away more and more from the public eye. While generally their help is welcomed by most, some say that the two nobles are taking advantage of this moment of weakness on part of the King.

Lord Hakon

Not all of Sauron's servants are wraiths. Hakon is a Barding thegn who was once a rich and influential merchant from Lake-town (first seen in *Erebor*, on page 58). He lost everything when Smaug fell on the city, and has been struggling to recover his former status ever since. Nominally a supporter of King Bard, Hakon spent years in building a web of allies among rogues and criminals, to pursue his personal aims, while at the same time posing as a trustworthy advisor to the throne of Dale.

When the Sorcerer of Forod returned to the North, the Ringwraith visited the courtier at Hakon's holdings in the Upper Marches. There, the Nazgûl made him an offer he could not refuse, and Lord Hakon has been in Morlach's grasp ever since.

Manipulated by the Sorcerer of Forod into believing he would be a better King, Hakon is putting all his efforts and resources toward bringing the downfall of Bard. He is unaware that the promised crown will mean very little should Mordor's plans come to full fruition.

Thegn Jofur

Jofur descends from a family from the southern Nether Marches that long ago settled in Lake-town. An official of the city of Dale, he strongly believes that the welfare of the realm should rely on the decisions of wise men and on the rule of law, not on the violent intervention of powerful lords (or even so-called 'heroes', for that matter). This position often puts him at odds with Lord Hakon, even if he doesn't suspect the nobleman to be anything more than exceedingly ambitious.

His uncompromising ideals can even make him appear to be the villain of the piece in several instances, and Jofur is likely to be disliked by the company, if not considered to be guilty of great wrongdoing. Nothing could be further from the truth: Jofur is steadfastly loyal to King Bard, but knows how delicate the balance of power is right now, with a weakened ruler on the throne.

Balin, Son of Fundin

One of Thorin's Company who accompanied Bilbo's adventure to the Lonely Mountain, Balin is committed to peace in the region more than anyone else in Erebor. He works tirelessly as a loyal servant of King Dáin, and as a friend of King Bard. Distraught at watching everything he worked to restore sink into misery, Balin seeks to preserve the alliance of the two kingdoms at all costs. He undertakes what needs to be done behind the scenes to maintain the peace and prosperity that the death of the Dragon has brought to Erebor and Dale. (Read more about Balin in *Erebor* on page 22).

The Passing of Years

If you want to follow the default pacing of gameplay suggested in *The One Ring Roleplaying Game*, playing all the adventures contained in *The Laughter of Dragons* should take several years. **The Silver Needle** might begin in 2957 after the tragic death of Queen Una the previous year. If the pace of one adventure per year continues, this places **Shadows in the North** opening in the year 2962.

A faster pace might put **The Silver Needle** and **Of Hammers and Anvils** in the same year, **To Dungeons Deep** the next year, **Sleeping Dragons Lie** the spring afterwards with **Dark Waters** that same year or the next. In any case, some time should pass before the final confrontation found in **Shadows in the North**.

- The Silver - Needle

- **When:** This adventure is set at the end of the summer of the year 2957.
- **Where:** The companions start in the city of Dale, leave town to track down a bandit leader, and end up fighting in the alleys of the Old Quarter.
- **What:** The company seeks the leader of a bandit gang plaguing travellers in the Dalelands. The companions discover the bandits are after an old craftswoman and her prized possession.
- **Why:** The old woman is the owner of a wondrous item possessing great power. It blesses her creations with an almost lifelike quality.
- **Who:** The craftswoman, Kelda, is targeted by Longo the Bandit-lord.

Adventuring Phase

This adventure is divided into four parts.

Part One - At the Traders Gate

Traders leave Dale, their carts laden with goods from the summer trading season, and their heads full of talk of bandits. Bandits attack an old woman. A meek Hobbit far from home has information on why she was attacked.

Part Two - Searching the Roads

The bandits and their leader, Longo, have been seen on the roads to the south of Dale. The companions leave Dale to find the bandits, but will find more than simple robbers.

Part Three - Thieves in Dale

Rushing back to Dale, the company finds Kelda's home engulfed in flames. Amongst the crowd, the bandits flee with their prize.

Part Four - The Bandit's Lair

A final showdown in the ruins of the Old Quarter.

Epilogue

The Bandit Lord is dealt with and the final disposition of the Silver Needle is made.

Of Relics and Needles

The adventure features two Wondrous Artefacts, one cursed and one blessed. Longo, a Hobbit-turned-bandit-leader, years ago found a black dagger-sheath in the Barrow-downs. Made by the Men of Westernesse, the sheath is tainted by a Curse of Weakness that awoke dark thoughts of violence and murder in the Hobbit and condemned him to a life of misdeeds. The cursed Hobbit now seeks the Silver Needle, an ancient object of Elven-make, used for centuries to create marvellous dresses and clothing that in time ended in the keeping of Kelda, an embroiderer from Dale (see page 9). Longo was informed of the needle's existence by agents of the Sorcerer of Forod, who desires the artefact to further his plans of slowly bringing misery and despair in the area. But Longo does not require an excuse to desire such an artefact – such is his thirst for power.

- Part One - At the Traders Gate

The end of the summer trading season has come to Dale. For days on end, the Merchants Way teems with carts piled high with goods, streaming away from the town. Buyers from all over Wilderland and beyond leave the Market Square, carrying barrels of salted fish taken from the headwaters of the River Running, longbows and shields in the Dalish style, and precious woodwork crafted by the Elves of Mirkwood. Chief among their prizes though, are the cunning, almost magical toys made by the Dwarves of the Lonely Mountain, and the extraordinary creations of the fire-workers of Dale.

The Gate is Shut

The company is just arriving to town. Perhaps they are returning from a previous adventure, to enjoy a well-deserved break in a town they know well, or they might even have been called back from an influential patron. Whatever the situation, they are on the Merchants Way, moving with the flow of traders returning to the city.

As the heroes approach the Traders Gate, they notice that the doors are shut and that a large crowd of people is assembling in front of the city walls. Getting closer, the heroes discover that a cart carrying a heavy load of large blocks of stone is lying upturned in the middle of the road with a broken wheel, and that an elderly Dwarf is lying motionless under it. From the excited conversation of a dozen Dwarves who are trying to move the broken cart out of the way and free the unfortunate fellow, the heroes learn that the accident may have been the consequence of a heated debate between the old merchant and a younger relative, who is now sitting by the side of the road, tearing at his beard in desperation.

To the dismay of the many bystanders, eager to leave or enter Dale, the Traders Gate has been shut, as the City Officials need to see the matter through. Within a few minutes, a dozen City Guards exit the gate leading a team of mules and start to slowly make their way through the assembled crowd to the broken cart: there seems to be no other choice but wait for them to help the Dwarves and free the road. Heroes eager to assist are shooed away... this is Official business and must be done the Right Way.

Patience

The crowd of agitated people waiting for the cart to be removed slowly spreads along the walls of the city, forming small knots of people as friends seek each other. Everyone is complaining, talking excitedly and grumbling about the situation. The same, obvious solutions to the problem are offered multiple times to the City Guards, as they try to patiently navigate the situation.

A large group of Mannish strangers seem to adopt a better, more philosophical answer to the trouble at hand: they all sit down in a circle to the left of the gate, and start making tea on a small campfire. Judging from their garb they all seem to hail from the East. When it becomes obvious that the wait is not going to be brief, other travellers follow their example, and soon several improvised campsites appear at the sides of the road.

Waiting, Waiting...

A half-dozen or so armed companions do not pass unobserved in a crowd composed mainly of old merchants and young apprentices. Soon, the heroes find themselves the object of many a conversation, and the target of multiple questions from the most curious: many queries concern the security of the roads of Wilderland, and a matter of bandits that are said to prowl the trading routes in recent times.

Every traveller here has a story about this Bandit-lord, Longo, and his group of vicious Men. The true nature of the bandits remains obscure though, as a rumour often contradicts another. Some say the bandits are half-Orcs, others swear they are Wayward Elves, others merchants even imply that the brigands are likely hiding amongst the travellers stuck outside the city right now!

Faces in the Crowd

Amongst the people waiting outside the Traders Gate are a few individuals whom the characters may take note of or have particular interactions with. As the company is stuck outside for a fair amount of time, the Loremaster may use the following paragraphs to manage the interaction of the companions with the various merchants and travellers.

Kelda – Old Craftswoman

An older Barding woman, with long grey hair wrapped with a colourful cloth in the style of the Northern Dalemen. She is sitting with her legs crossed, stitching a figure on the robe of a small girl, using a slender silver needle and a red thread. Under her expert hands, the stitching soon takes the form of a snake, twisting around the button holes of the child's tunic. The small girl is transfixed, as if watching a magic worker. Kelda lives within the city and is waiting to go home after visiting family in Esgaroth.

Thulim, Nephew of Dulin – Dwarven Mason

Thulim is the Dwarven mason whose argument with his uncle led to the accident. He is worried out of his wits about his uncle's well-being, and would be extremely grateful if any adventurer does something to help him (he will offer to compensate them with his work). Dulin isn't actually wounded too seriously, but he aims to aggrieve his nephew – when drawn out from under the cart, he is found to have only suffered a few cuts and bruises.

The City Guards

Three members of the City Guard watch the crowd of travellers waiting to enter Dale, telling everyone to wait at the side of the road. They seem annoyed by the situation and tolerate little interference from adventurers and travellers alike.

Clovis – A Hobbit

A Hobbit with a large nose, dark hair, and a full head of greying curls is sharing some of his bread and cheese with a group of travellers, all the while speaking about the troubles on the roads lately. He says his name is Clovis, and he is the first to mention having heard about this bandit Longo and his fearsome group.

When asked about himself, Clovis tells quietly of how he was captured by brigands while travelling to Sarn Ford, in distant Eriador. He was lucky to escape with his life. He says he is finally close to returning home, and is currently seeking a caravan heading west, but has travelled enough to be choosy about to whom he will give his trust. Clovis has deep set lines hinting at the many troubles he has faced, but has an air of quiet confidence, much like that of a seasoned adventurer.

Katun – Merchant of the Easterlings

The leader of the company of Men from the East is a middle-aged woman, with a youthful smile and penetrating eyes.

She offers tea to any travellers who approach her and her group. She patiently waits for the gate to open, urging her companions to do the same.

Idle Chatter

There are many talking while they wait for the Traders Gate to open. Here are some bits of small talk to provide atmosphere.

- *"Kelda is one of the best embroiderers in Dale. Her creations aren't precious in the common sense - she doesn't employ rich fabrics or jewels – but her best work looks almost alive."*
- *"I hear the Dwarves whose cart broke down leaving the city tried to sell their stone at almost double the price of other quarrymen. Only because it was cut by Dwarves!"*
- *"That halfling is so nice. I was feeling unwell and he told me about one of his people's old remedies. I told him to come stay with me anytime he is in Dale again."*
- *"I'm glad I went through the Grey Mountain Narrows. That bandit, Longo, is on the Southern roads and I hear he's been attacking every merchant he encounters!"*
- *"I've got 10 pelts that I need to get inside for curing. I only partially treated them for travel, and if I don't get them on racks soon they'll all spoil!"*
- *"Longo's no threat! I told that halfling over there about the time I faced a talking Spider in the forest. He just chuckled and told me about a time he was with a group that killed four talking Spiders. What a story-teller. Small bodies make tall tales, aye."*
- *"I hear tell that someone brought to town a brandy distilled in Dorwinion that is so sweet, one drop and nothing else will ever taste the same! No thank you! If I ever got to try that, I'd never be satisfied with ale again!"*
- *"If this cart isn't cleared within the hour, the King himself will hear of it! See if those Dwarves ever trade here again! They must be Iron Hill Dwarves. Our Dwarves are far more respectful!"*

The Scuffle

Mixed among the waiting travellers are three Men who are keeping a watch over Kelda, the embroiderer. They are dressed for travelling, with boots and cloaks, and one wears a battered helm. They are waiting for a chance to get to her and take something of worth from her. The chance arrives when a loud, drawn-out creaking draws all eyes to the gate - the cart is finally being drawn off by the guards and their pack of mules. The wait seems to be over and people make ready to approach the gate, waiting for the moment when the doors will open.

As the crowd gathers closer to the Traders Gate, the skulking Men make their move: they quickly and silently wade through the crowd, reaching Kelda as she is still collecting her belongings. Kelda starts screaming as the attackers grab at her, their swords drawn, apparently trying to take something from her.

If the companions react quickly and rush to the aid of the distressed embroiderer, they find Clovis, the wandering Hobbit, already there brandishing a dagger. He succeeded in chasing the attackers away and the robbers flee, running across the camp of the Easterlings and quickly disappearing.

Aftermath

When the dust settles, the City Guards intervene and disperse the crowd gathering around the spot where the scuffle took place. Luckily, Kelda has suffered only small bruises from the aggression. If asked, the embroiderer says she is not sure why the bandits attacked her, but they were grabbing for her pouch. The only thing of value are a few luck charms she keeps there, and her tools, like a number of needles - the silken and golden threads she

carries in her backpack are much more valuable, she says. Kelda adds that she has heard one of the Men say the name of the bandit-leader, Longo, and wonders what he could want from her.

Clovis the Hobbit says that he has heard stories about Longo as well.

"People are always happy to talk to a Hobbit, and many have told me that Longo is a Easterling, but that could just be their taste for the exotic... Some other travellers I spoke with said the bandits came out of the East, but that's just the Upper Marches, certainly not distant Khand! If you seek this Longo out, you'll probably have to start somewhere along the river near there."

If any companion traded friendly words with Katun, she approaches them and confirms that she too heard the attackers saying the name Longo. She adds that she has heard this name many times already, and has heard the rumour about him being an Easterling. Katun seriously doubts this, but she is interested in the reputation of her folk to be cleared: since the companions are adventurers, couldn't they take the matter into their own capable hands, and bring this Longo to justice? Katun could easily persuade many merchants to pay them a reward should they succeed.

The Gate Opens

Finally, the doors of the Traders Gate are pushed open, and the traffic in and out of the city begins to resume in its regularity. Within minutes, only a few burnt branches and discarded foodstuff remain to mark the spots where the various improvised campsites were set up by the waiting merchants.

The companions can now continue into the city, to go about their business and experience the comforts of Dale (the Loremaster may use the material presented in *Erebor*, starting from page 34).

Hidden in Plain Sight

The Hobbit going by the name of Clovis is the bandit-lord Longo, a clever fiend who uses his guile to set up his targets. As the trustworthy-looking Clovis from the Shire he gathers information, then he employs it to remove the biggest threats and hurdles, and finally proceeds to seek his prize.

His story of being taken by brigands and escaping is true, and he tells it without claiming any falsehoods. This makes his cover more believable as he digs into his past memories and emotions (**Insight** rolls made to observe Clovis reveal nothing but a wary personality that has lived through many unfortunate occurrences). Clovis does truly seek to return to the Shire, but desires to amass a large fortune before doing so.

What he leaves out of his story is that he was born into a well-to-do family of the Southfarthing, the only son of an inn-keeper. Always troubled by a rebellious spirit, Longo dreamed of hidden gold and gems, and he was still in his tweens when he decided to leave the Shire. Soon, he fell into a bad company, a ragtag band of big folk and Hobbits, scrounging a meagre living in desolate Eriador out of occasional work and small crimes.

After several years Longo decided he had enough and concocted a lamentable plan: with the help of two Breelanders he decided to rob his own home in the Shire, succeeding in entering his father's Hobbit-hole and stealing the family jewels and precious heirlooms. Longo and his two partners fled south, but upon reaching Sarn Ford, the Hobbit experienced a moment of clarity and stood frozen in his tracks: he told the two Breemen that he had changed his mind, and ordered them to drop the loot and let him return it. As an answer, the two stabbed him. Longo managed to escape, albeit wounded, and fled north into the Barrow-downs...

Longo recalls only snippets of the nights he spent in the Barrow-downs, bleeding from a wounded leg. He remembers a cold voice, and a colder shadow that fell upon him when he entered a barrow to find shelter from the rain. When he finally stumbled upon the Road to the North the morning after, he was clutching a black dagger sheath, without recollections of how or where he found it.

In time, Longo discovered some of the properties of his 'treasure'. He found that he enjoyed a greater confidence in his own capabilities while wearing the scabbard, and that he could easily influence people, even have them follow and obey him. Unfortunately, he also started to develop an overpowering need to use his newfound power to use others to pursue his own means, and to prey upon them.

With a clever mind and the Shadow-tainted scabbard at his side, Longo travelled East, across the Misty Mountains and into Wilderland. There, he gathered around him brigands, robbers and cutthroats of all sorts, Men that could be easily swayed by his ambitions and superior charisma. Under his lead, the bandits have made quite a name for themselves, and eventually came to the attention of the Sorcerer of Forod, who was quick to recognise the potential usefulness of Longo and his men.

Recently, the Nazgûl has sent Longo information that has put him on the tracks of the Silver Needle. The Hobbit has been promised a rich reward for it, something that has made the Bandit-lord very suspicious... so suspicious that he intends to see the artefact and inspect it for its real worth before he hands it to someone else.

Taking the Bait, or Not?

If the companions hesitate to go and seek out Longo and his men, a guard may hear of their involvement with the scuffle at the gate and ask for their help. Otherwise, a local patron may ask if they can look into the issue, as Longo's deeds are starting to affect many amongst the people of Dale. If one of the company is of high enough standing to be seated at the King's table, they may find Bard's young son Bain concerned by tales of this Longo and the menace he presents to travellers.

Should the company finally take an interest in Longo, they soon hear many people in Dale talk of attacks on the less travelled paths to the south of the city, east of the River Running. Some merchants use these paths in place of taking the Merchants Way or boating down the river

The Black Scabbard

Wrought of black steel, light and strong, and set with many fiery stones, this dagger sheath rested long in the shadow under a mound in Tyrn Gorthad. The weaponsmith who crafted it originally bestowed a blessing of Awe upon it, to make the orders of a Captain of War resound with superior authority. But the darkness of the barrow has twisted the power wound about it, and when Longo stole it from the mound, a curse fell upon the Hobbit, marking his life forever.

The Blessing

When Longo wears the black scabbard and displays it openly (he keeps his long knife in it) his charisma is exalted much beyond his stature, and no one can escape the power of his words. The men of his band of brigands almost worship him, and would never think of deserting or betraying him.

If the companions have no reason to doubt 'Clovis', the power of the scabbard manifests by making him appear completely trustworthy – for example, any Insight roll yields no alarming clues. Should a player explicitly say they don't trust the hobbit, then a roll of Insight would give a result only if it produces a great or extraordinary result. In that case, the roll will reveal that some external power is at work, giving strength to the Hobbit's presence.

The Curse

The Curse of Weakness marring the Black Scabbard has provoked Longo to become Murderous (*see Rivendell, page 102*), setting the Hobbit on a downward path into Shadow. When the Sorcerer of Forod arrived in the Dalelands, it was easy for Radbal and Maugor, the Orcs of Dol Guldur (*see pages 14 and 21*) to enlist Longo among the informants of the Nazgûl.

to avoid passing through Esgaroth or to return to their villages and farms in the Upper Marches by a more direct way. There is speculation by some that the bandits have a large camp somewhere there and travel in smaller groups to make their raids.

Longo's Plan

Now that his first attempt at stealing the Silver Needle was interrupted, Longo needs to prepare a new plan and he won't suffer anyone to interfere with it, in particular the companions: his hinting for them to seek out the bandits aims to lead the group into an ambush far from Dale and be rid of them.

The rest of this adventure is presented considering that the companions leave Dale in search of Longo. If the heroes do not take any of the baits that the bandit leader has left for them, then the Loremaster should skip *Part Two* entirely and adapt slightly the text for *Part Three: Thieves in Dale*, and beyond.

- Part Two -
Searching the Roads

The company sets off searching for the bandit camp in the Upper Marches, to the east of the Running River. Considering the relatively short distance, there's no need to call for Fatigue tests.

But finding the bandits won't be easy. There is much ground to cover, and even if the search is limited to the immediate vicinity of the watercourse the rains of the last few days have made the paths muddy and unpleasant.

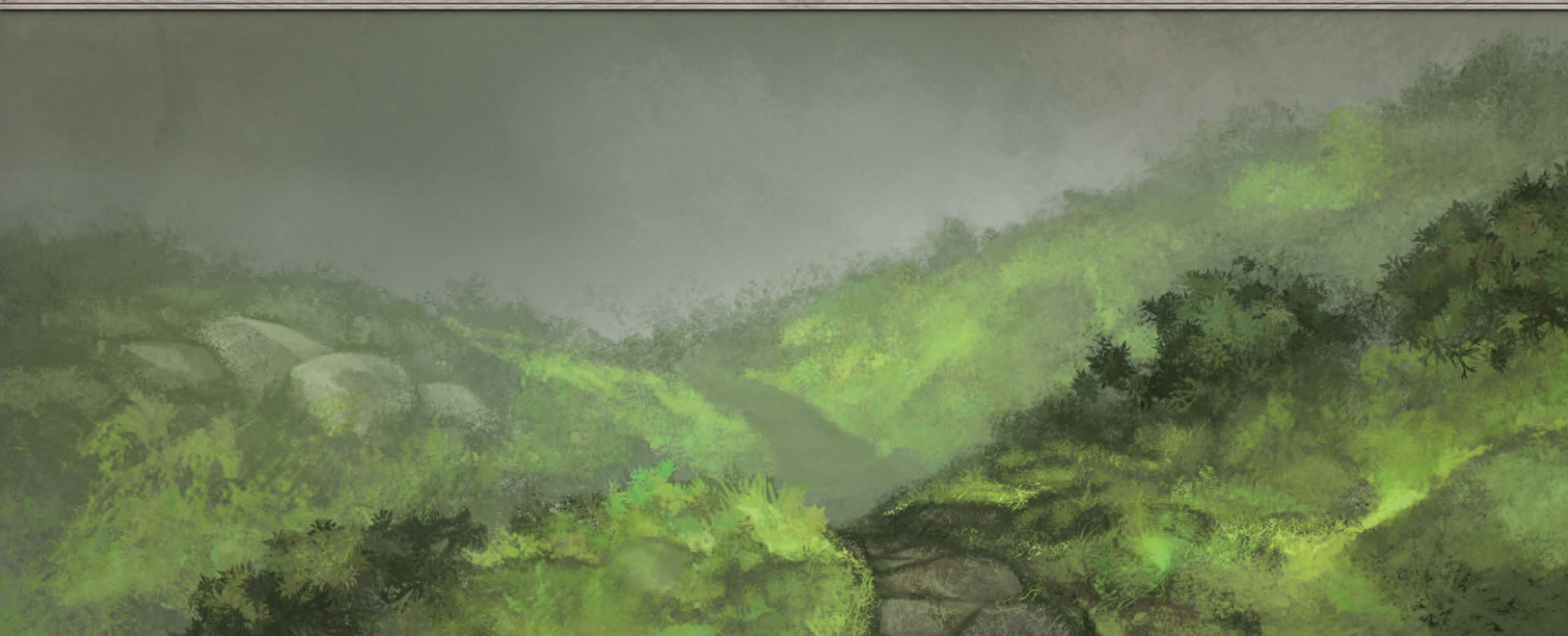
- All heroes acting as scouts or huntsmen are allowed two rolls every day, using **Explore**, **Search**, or **Hunting**. With four successes, the companions have found a well-trod path across the wilderness, a trail likely to lead them to the bandit camp (see *The Cold Bog*, below).

The company meet few travellers as they search for Longo. When they do, the encounters are rarely pleasant: the travellers seem to have chosen these paths exactly to avoid meeting others and do not show much interest in talking to strangers. Appropriate skill rolls and gestures of kindness, such as sharing food, are required to open any traveller up to conversation.

- When this happens, the companions hear again news of Longo and his men: A successful roll of **Persuade** or **Courtesy** counts as one of the four required successes to find the right path.

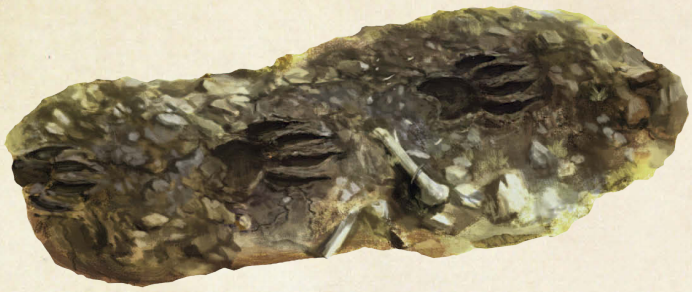
On the Right Path

Once set upon the right path, the companions' search takes an easterly course, crossing into the western edges of the Upper Marches. Here, they make their way across



the open countryside for several miles, until the trail starts leading them south, into a desolate, miry heath, whose eastern side is walled by a rampart of crags. No one lives around here, it seems.

For a while, the tracks lead the companions along a gurgling stream, until its course becomes lost into a wet bog. Now, dry reeds rise among wide fens and mires, and a thick mist lays in heavy banks, unmoving in the windless hours that precede the setting of the sun.



The Cold Bog

The companions have entered a desolate bog, part of the Long Marshes, the main expanse of which lays to the south-west of them. This remote corner of the Dalelands is not the secret refuge of Longo and his men, but it is where a band of Orcs of Dol Guldur have found sanctuary instead.

Longo of course knows about the Orcs. Their chieftain, Radbal, is his liaison with the Sorcerer of Forod — the Hobbit has sent the companions right into a well-prepared ambush.

Finding the Camp

Marching across the marshy terrain of the bog makes for some slow and uncomfortable exploring. Again, all heroes acting as scouts or huntsmen can make their two daily rolls, using **Explore**, **Search**, or **Hunting**, but the difficulty is raised to TN 16.

The companions find the encampment of the Orcs after two days of searching, in an area where the reeds are thick and the fog lays heavy and cold. It is a narrow stretch of dry land, shielded from view by tall reeds, covered with sparse shrubs and a handful of mossy, skeletal trees. The Orcs are waiting for the heroes to show up.

- How prepared the companions will be to confront the Orc's ambush depends on how many successes they will have achieved that far exploring the bog (as usual, consider each great success to count for two successes, and three successes for an extraordinary roll).

Ambush!

When the heroes draw close to the Orc camp, their success at tracking the enemy determines whether they will be ambushed or able to sneak up on the Orcs themselves. Each player rolls **Awareness** or **Hunting**, using the difficulty listed below. If they fail, they will be surprised (see page 167 of *The One Ring Roleplaying Game* for the full rules on surprise attacks).

Check the entry corresponding to the number of successes produced while exploring:

- **0-2:** The companions haven't found anything that might tip them off about the ambush and are completely unaware of the coming assault (TN 20).

- **3-4:** The heroes are following a trail of tracks (probably those left by the lieutenants of Longo) but have no reason to think they are expected (TN 18).

- **5-6:** The companions have found some proof of the presence of Orcs in the bog, and are thus moderately alert (TN 16).

- **7+:** The companions have found clear Orc tracks, and thus are alert and ready (TN 14).

The Orcs of Dol Guldur

The Orcs from Dol Guldur are not a group of cravenly minions, only ready to do what is commanded of them when whipped. Radbal and his lads have fought together for many long years, and have fought several times against both Elves and Men.

They are all hardened veterans, and their captain has felled many a champion with his heavy scimitar. When they spring their trap, all the Orcs send their spears flying in a single volley. They target each companion at least once, but since there are more Orcs than heroes, they target any Elf or Dwarf multiple times.

Longo's Lieutenants

Longo sent three of his men (Vig, Kasper and Swain) to warn Radbal to expect the company. If the Loremaster wants a tougher fight, they can join the combat (see page 23). However, they are expected back in Dale and will flee as soon as the tide of battle turns against the Orcs.

They use secret ways through the marshlands and if the company wishes to follow them it requires 9 successes at Hunting (TN 20) to track them back to the gates of Dale.

Muddy Sword-work

When the fight at close quarters begins, the companions are still slowly emerging from the clinging mud of the bog, while the Orcs are attacking from firmer ground. The heroes are considered to be *severely hindered* for the first round of combat.

Radbal's lads are Orc Guards (*The One Ring Roleplaying Game*, page 240), and Radbal is a Messenger of Lugbúrz (*The One Ring*, page 238). There are 2 Orc Guards for each companion. Additionally, all the Orcs are *Battle-hardened* – they add their Attribute rating to their Parry score, and Radbal is also *Skillful* and *Trained* – both his Weapon skills are augmented by 1 rank each, and his heavy scimitar is favoured (see *Rivendell*, page 67, for more on adversary enhancements).

Finally, the Orcs will not suffer from their *Hate Sunlight* ability at any hour of the day, as the light is obscured by the heavy banks of mist.

The Orcs fight at the best of their abilities, exploiting their *Hideous Toughness*, with Radbal supporting them from behind using his *Commanding Voice*. If Radbal is killed, all the Orc Guards lose immediately 1 point of Hate.

A Mystery Revealed

Either during the battle or afterwards, the company will learn the true identity of Longo. Before he dies, Radbal curses the Hobbit:

"Longo, that halfling maggot! He set up us very well indeed... he wants the Needle for himself... I hope the Sorcerer gets the fool and freezes the flesh off his back!"

If he doesn't get a chance in the heat of battle, the tough old Orc can spit his curses through clenched teeth as he dies. Longo's treachery was of the more practical sort: no matter who won the fight, a thorn in his side is gone. The 'Sorcerer' is the first hint to the players there is more here than simple banditry.

Return to Dale

Once the company has dealt with the Orcs they will likely try to return to Dale as fast as they can, to look for Clovis/Longo, or, if they figured out what's going on, to protect Kelda.

- Going straight for Dale in a hurry requires all companions to pass a **Travel** test with TN 16; heroes failing the roll see their Fatigue rating raise by a number equal to the Encumbrance value of their Travelling gear.

- Part Three - Thieves in Dale

If the companions left Dale to look for Longo's camp, as they struggle to find their way in the Long Marshes, Longo proceeds with his plan to steal the Silver Needle.

The Craftswoman's Fate

Kelda lives and works in a house in the Old Quarter of Dale. She sleeps in a room on the first floor of the house, while the ground floor, an open arched space facing a well-trafficked alley, serves as her workshop. On any given weekday, Kelda can be seen sitting on her bench working on her creations, with the exception of each Wednesday, when she can be found selling her wares from her stall in the Market-square of Dale.

The night after the departure of the companions from Dale, Longo and his men arrive at Kelda's house after midnight. They silently force their way into the shuttered workshop, and take the Silver Needle. Kelda discovers that the needle is missing the following morning. The grief provoked by the loss is too much for the old artisan, and she falls into a dark melancholic mood.

The Companions Return

Tricked by the Hobbit's cunning to leave town, the heroes make their way back to Dale.

The companions have two main choices in front of them: do they go and *look for Kelda*, as they have realised she is in danger, or do they *search for Longo* and his hideout?

Looking For Kelda

If the companions look for Kelda, they can simply ask about her in town, as many know her as one of the best embroiderers in Dale. Moreover, word of the theft spreads rapidly.

When they arrive at her shop in the Old Quarter, they find it closed, its heavy wooden shutters showing clear signs of intrusion. Kelda is actually inside, as the companions may discover if they attempt to enter, or if they wait long enough to hear her moving inside.

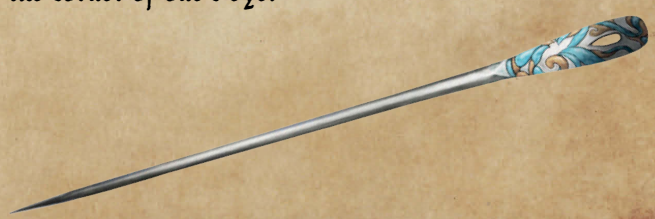
When Kelda sees the companions, she recognises them from the episode at the gate of Dale. In tears, the artisan tells her sad story, eventually asking the heroes to leave her alone in her sorrow. She considers her precious needle

The Silver Needle

The story of the Silver Needle is a very long one, and it is mostly lost. It was made by the Elves long, long ago, but eventually ended up in the treasuries of Erebor, before the coming of Smaug. When the Dragon claimed the Lonely Mountain as his own, the Silver Needle was saved from ruin by a couple of Dwarven clothiers, who were later forced to sell it to some drapers from Lake-town.

In time, the needle changed many hands, in the end becoming a token of love, given by an adoring suitor to a young Kelda. The craftswoman doesn't know the story of the needle, nor does she suspect its worth – all she knows is that she feels as if she were still a young embroiderer when she uses it, as her hand never trembles, and that she is always able to accomplish exactly what she endeavours to create.

When used to sew a garment, or to stitch an embroidery or tapestry, the Silver Needle works into the fabric of the piece the subtle magic of its Elven creators: the cloth retains some of the user's thoughts when it was being sewn, and makes them appear before the eyes of those that look at it, all the while giving to the sewn object a life-like quality: a dress seems to wave and ripple as if moved by a faint breeze, a tapestry evokes the sounds and smells of the image it shows, the embroidery on a cloak seems to shimmer and dance in the corner of one's eye.



to be lost, and would rather try to forget it completely than nurture false hopes.

If pressed, Kelda may recount what she knows about the needle (not much, see *The Silver Needle*). A roll of **Lore** or **Riddle** can at least determine from her description that the item must be magical in origin.

Vig, the Spy

Longo's bandits are keeping an eye on Kelda, as Longo wants to be warned in advance if the companions, or anyone else for that matter, go to the embroiderer asking questions.

If the heroes are keeping a look-out, on a successful roll of **Awareness** they spot a man of dubious intentions whose face they might find familiar: it is Vig, one of Longo's henchmen. If the companions try to approach the spy, he runs, trying to disappear into the crowd.

Should the companions attempt to seize Vig, the chase can be resolved as a prolonged action, requiring 5 successful rolls of **Athletics** against a severe difficulty (TN 18, Vig is fast, and the streets are crowded); no cooperation is allowed, each chasing companion must gain the required rolls individually to succeed (the first to achieve the five successes is the one to catch Vig). If Vig is taken over, he doesn't try to resist and is easily captured.

- If a companion fails a roll, Vig gains ground on the failing companion, and she must spend her next success catching up (it does not count for the total). If a companion fails twice, the hero has lost sight of the spy and is out of the chase.

- If a hero fails producing an , the companion suffers an accident (he runs into a passing wheelbarrow and stumbles, he takes a wrong turn and hits a wall, etc.) and is out of the chase.

If the companions capture Vig, he is found to be a stray Man from the Dalelands, made grim in both countenance and spirit by many years spent in the Wild. Unfortunately for the heroes, he is firmly under the influence of Longo's superior charisma, and will refuse to reveal anything about what he was doing or who sent him.

A companion succeeding in a roll using **Insight** gets the impression that Vig has an unnatural fear of something, or someone. Using this information, the hero may attempt to counter the effects of the 'spell' controlling him, by making an **Awe** roll against TN 16 and getting a great or extraordinary success.

If Vig is snapped out of Longo's domination, he breaks down under the sudden realisation of all the wicked things he has done following the Hobbit's orders, and will give away the name and identity of his master: Longo the Hobbit hides in a building in Brokenstone, protected by his band of cutthroats.

Kasper and Swain

If at least some of the companions are busy running after Vig, Kasper and Swain enact the next part of the Sorcerer's plan to destroy the spirit of the Dalefolk. Profiting from the commotion that a bunch of running adventurers is making in the streets of the Old Quarter, the two minions

of Longo set fire to Kelda's apartment, throwing a lantern through a window of her first floor. The fuel from the lantern spreads rapidly, as Kelda keeps a store of her materials upstairs, and when the smoke is seen from the street it's too late to save the shop. After a few minutes, the wooden planks of the first floor start to fall blazing onto the ground floor.

If the companions were all busy catching the spy, they will discover the fire only when it's too late. Otherwise, they may at least rescue Kelda – the old embroiderer is desperately trying to save her life's work exposing herself to the flames.

Searching the burning, smoke-filled building exposes a hero to the fire for at least 3 rounds, causing a loss of 6 Endurance points per round, and the hero must make a Protection test (TN 16) to avoid being Wounded by the flames. A hero that makes a successful **Awareness** roll finds Kelda and a successful **Athletics** roll carries her out of the building the next round. If the old embroiderer is saved, she collapses in the arms of the adventurer that rescued her: with her precious needle lost and her shop destroyed, she is utterly broken.

Searching For Longo

The companions may have discovered where Longo is hiding from the confession of his henchman Vig, but if the brigand wasn't captured, the companions have another way to get that vital information, as a Hobbit is not yet a familiar sight in Dale.

The best way to conduct such an investigation is probably the Market Square and its surroundings: the people selling their wares and their customers come from all across town, and the square is also the best place to gossip.

- Finding information about Longo in the Market Square is a prolonged action, requiring 8 successful rolls to be achieved, allowing for cooperation and best suited to skills like **Courtesy, Insight, Persuade** and **Riddle**. Each companion is allowed two rolls per day.

- The difficulty of all rolls is TN 18, as Longo has proven extremely proficient in spreading false clues about himself all over Dale, and the powers of his scabbard have made his lies all the more believable.

Reduce the rolls required for each of the following elements contributing to the heroes' reputation:

- The heroes saved Kelda from the fire (-1).
- The company captured Vig, but could not break Longo's control over him (-1).
- At least one companion has a Standing level in Dale of 3+ (-1).

When the prolonged action is achieved, the heroes will have figured out the general whereabouts of the bandits' lair: a building in Brokenstone, in the Old Quarter of Dale.

Playing the Investigation

Achieving 8 successful rolls will probably take a few days of investigation. The Loremaster can use the following paragraphs to colour the interaction of the players with the townsfolk.

- Lissa is the youngest daughter of a smith. She has seen Clovis and talked with him until the Hobbit became annoyed with her many questions. He still gave her a piece of sweet bread and asked her about Kelda.

- An unusually talkative Dwarf named Donar is convinced that the Hobbit has some clandestine dealings in the Old Quarter.

- Gudrun washes clothes all day and gossips with (and about) everyone. She loves talking and saw the Hobbit many times. Once, she overheard the Hobbit say something about "the barracks".

- Olyia is a member of Katun's group of merchants. She has been looking for a place to use as a warehouse in the Old Quarter when she was chased away from a building by some men after she thought she heard some wild beast's grunting!

Tipping off Longo

If Vig hasn't been captured by the companions and the embroiderer's shop has been burned down, Longo is probably feeling rather safe from the companions. This doesn't mean he is not paying attention:

- If the companions roll one or more ᚠ while looking for information about Longo, they alert some of the spies the Hobbit has planted all over town.

If this happens, the Hobbit will be ready for them when they come to get him in his lair in the Old Quarter (see overleaf).

- Part Four - The Bandit's Lair

When the companions find themselves armed with precise information about where Longo is hiding, it is time to take action and try to put an end to Longo's misdeeds.

Will the heroes attempt to *denounce Longo to King Bard*, or will they intervene personally, going to Longo's Lair?

Denouncing Longo to King Bard

The most natural course of action is probably going to the authorities. Dale is a civilised town, not a forsaken village lost in the Wilderland. How better to deal with a band of brigands hiding in the middle of a populated area than calling for the City Guard to intervene?

If the companions go to the Royal Palace of Dale to meet the King they do not find him. They are received by one of his advisors instead, as King Bard leaves all matters concerning public order in the hands of other courtiers.

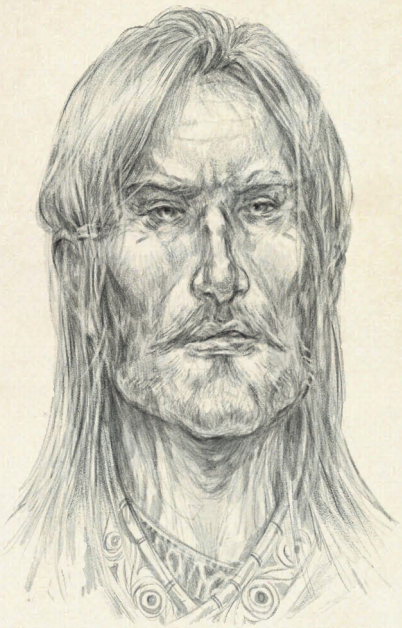
King Bard in 2957

Following the events narrated in *The Darkening of Mirkwood*, King Bard suffered the tragic loss of his Queen in the year 2956. Accordingly, in the years following King Bard is often absent in body or spirit as he grieves. He leaves everyday decisions to his counsellors. If you are not considering those events as canon, then simply have Bard be away on a diplomatic mission to the Elves, or out hunting in the Dalelands.

Enter Lord Hakon

The advisor meeting the heroes is Hakon, a sombre nobleman who seems to have more pressing matters than listening to adventurers requesting his help to solve some trouble with brigands. He listens impatiently to what the companions have to say, all the while writing something on a piece of parchment. The companions finally get his attention when they mention Longo and his presence in town...

Unfortunately for the companions, Lord Hakon is a plotting conspirator, furthering many personal concerns at the expense of the common good (see page 6, and his description in Erebor, page 58). He is well aware of the activities of Longo, and it is against his best interests to see the Hobbit behind bars.



When the name of Longo is mentioned, Hakon pretends to be snapped out of his impatience, feigning surprise and horror at the description of Longo's misdeeds, and by the end of the meeting he promises to send in the guards as soon as possible. In truth, he will first warn Longo of the imminent incursion, allowing the Hobbit to escape. The dastardly bandit lord will leave a half dozen of his men behind, to lend credibility to Hakon's actions.

Playing Hakon

To avoid giving Hakon's double-dealing away to the players, the Loremaster should set up the encounter with him using the usual rules, pretending to take the heroes' words (and skill rolls) into account. In truth, nothing will affect the result.

Hakon is a Barding nobleman in his late forties, with long hair, and dressing in the finest silks. He apparently values Valour over Wisdom. (Lord Hakon will return in **Of Hammers and Anvils, To Dungeons Deep** and **Shadows in the North**.)

Is the Adventure Over?
If the companions let Hakon take the matter into his own hands, the adventure is basically over: Longo will leave Dale with his life and the Silver Needle.

Perhaps, something in Lord Hakon's behaviour will tip the players off, or at least make them doubt his competence. For example, they might notice that Hakon doesn't immediately call for the guards to intervene, but simply promises to do so 'at the earliest convenience'. Should they keep watch over the Royal Palace after the meeting with Hakon, the heroes will see that no courier is dispatched to bring any message to the City Guard headquarters. If the heroes smell something fishy, they will still be in time to anticipate the actions of the City Guard, especially because Hakon is delaying their intervention on purpose. If the circumstances allow it, the Loremaster could let the companions arrive as Longo is still preparing to leave his hideout.

Longo's Lair

The portion of Dale nearest the river, to the east is known as the Old Quarter. It was built over the ruins of the old Dale, and the majority of its buildings have been erected using stonework from the palaces and houses that Smaug reduced to rubble. The result is a mixture of old and new.

The southernmost part of the Old Quarter is a maze of twisting alleys and close-spaced buildings. Here the air is less wholesome, and it is hard not to get lost, even for a citizen of Dale. It is no coincidence that the majority of the town businesses of the least savoury type are to be found here: this area is what is known to some as the 'Brokenstone', the black market of Dale.

The Shadows of Brokenstone

To get to Longo's lair the companions must enter the Brokenstone, as the place they are looking for is an abandoned barracks building, somewhere in the proximity of the canal on the southern border of the Old Quarter.

The inhabitants of the Brokenstone are a suspicious lot and are generally wary of any "outsider" trespassing, but even the most daring among them would never try something against a group of fully armed adventurers. But if the heroes simply march through the alleys without concealing their intentions in any way, they will be noticed by some of Longo's men, on the look-out for any intruder: whether or not Hakon was consulted by the company, the Hobbit will be warned of the coming of the adventurers within minutes (an **Awareness** roll will notice several individuals that seem to be keeping an eye on them).

Searching

If the companions enter the Old Quarter with a fairly precise idea of where Longo is hiding (they captured Vig and convinced him to talk, or they gathered enough information in the market Square), it doesn't take much for them to locate the old army barracks. If, on the contrary, they haven't yet pinpointed the whereabouts of Longo's lair, they can still find the villain by succeeding in another prolonged action, requiring 6 rolls, using **Hunting**, **Search** or **Riddle** and allowing for cooperation.

The Barracks

The bandits' lair was once a barracks building used by the City Guard, in the south-eastern section of Brokenstone, a mere few blocks from the Quays. It is a large square building, with a central open area originally used by the guards to train. It appears abandoned, and the entry gate is boarded up. Longo and his men go in and out of the barracks using an underground passage that leads to an opening along the quays of a canal running south of the building.

There are 12 brigands along with Longo. To enter the building the companions have two options: breaking in from the entry gates, or sneak along the underground tunnel from the canal.

Smashing Down the Doors
If they want to enter the barracks without any further ado, the companions have no other choice than smash the boarded-up entry double doors leading to the training area. Alerted by the noise, the bandits inside will rapidly gather to confront them, to buy some time for Longo to make his escape.

- The brigands will first unleash a volley of arrows, and then charge across the training grounds. If they are not defeated within three rounds of combat, Longo will escape from the window of the Officers Chamber.

Orcs in Dale!

Maugor is an Orc of Dol Guldur. In the last few weeks, Maugor has acted as a liaison between Longo and Radbal, all the while keeping an eye on the Hobbit. He has entered the town by the river, and then hid in the barracks. The Orc is a loyal ally to the Hobbit (thanks to the influence of Longo's cursed scabbard).

When the companions show up, Maugor bides his time and hides, until he finds the right moment to attack the companions – possibly attacking one of them by surprise when Longo tries to subdue them thanks to his cursed scabbard (see The Final Confrontation below).

Sneaking along the Tunnel

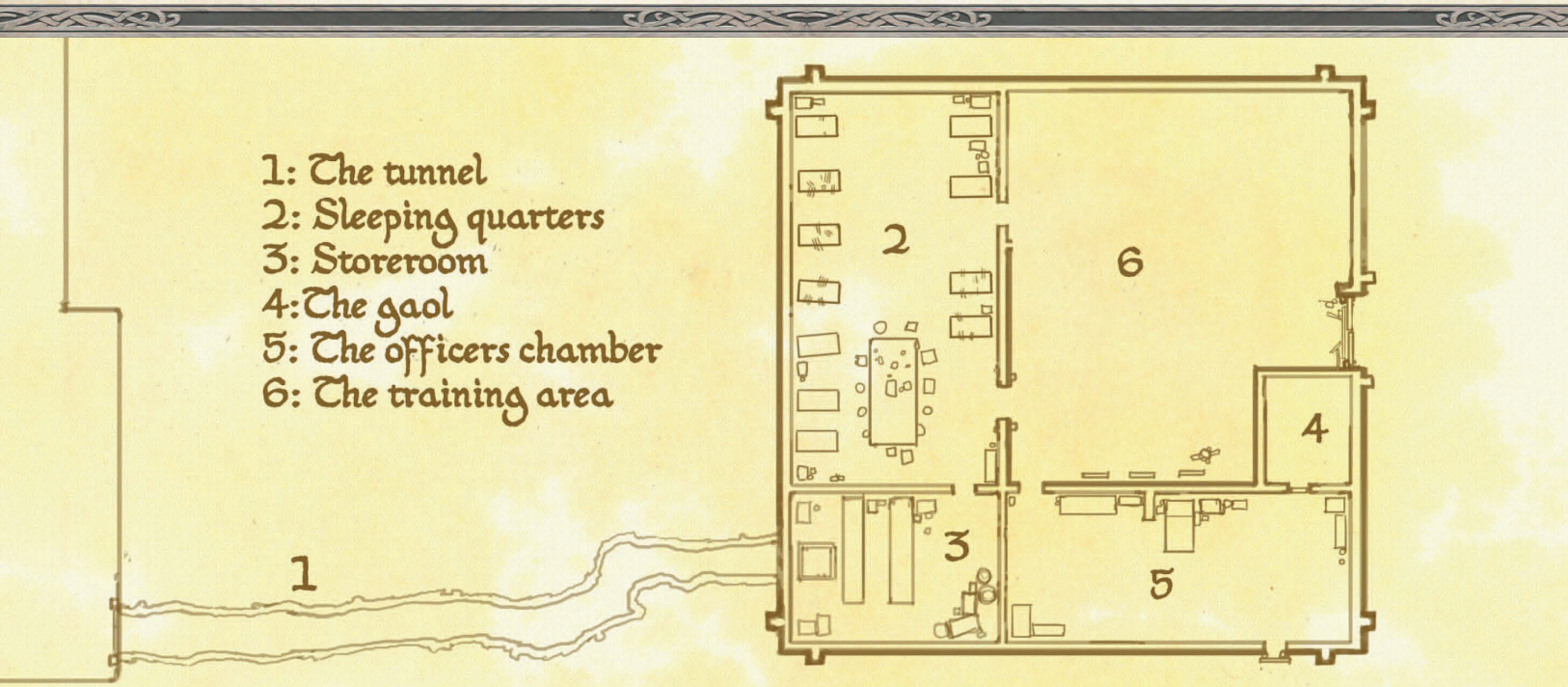
With enough information, or with a thorough scouting of the area, the companions may have located the canal entry instead. The round passage is reached by walking along the canal quay, and is barred by a locked iron grate. If the grate is opened by picking the lock (a roll of **Craft**, or using *Burglary*), the companions may quietly crawl into the tunnel to emerge in the storeroom.

- If they emerge from the storeroom, the brigands are taken by surprise: first, three of them show up (with perhaps Swain or Kasper among them), and the rest arrive only after three rounds of combat. If the first three are defeated before the others join them, the companions have a chance to get to the Officers chambers before Longo leaves.

Sleeping Quarters. A large, empty room that used to house the benches where the soldiers slept. The bandits sleep here, on the floor. A long table is set here for the brigands to eat.

Storeroom. A storage room filled with rotten and cracked wooden barrels and a tipped-over shelf of wine jugs. The narrow walking space between the two rows of barrels is covered in debris and wood splinters. A wooden trapdoor opens behind a row of barrels leading to the exit tunnel.

The Gaol. A small chamber, accessed by a single doorway, barred by a heavy wooden gate. Here sleeps Maugor, the Orc of Dol Guldur.



The Officers Chamber. This is Longo's private quarters. The chamber is protected by a reinforced door, and has a window facing out. The window is boarded from the outside, but Longo has loosened the boards to make sure he can easily break through them, in case he needs to make a quick exit from the building. The Hobbit keeps his belongings here, including the Silver Needle.

The Training Area. The wide, open area in the middle of the building has a dirt floor, and two rows of sturdy poles planted in the ground for sparring exercises, and a number of archery targets against the eastern wall.

The Final Confrontation

If Longo's men are dealt with swiftly enough, the companions can face the bandit leader himself. His back to the wall, Longo tries to play his best hand yet. When the companions approach the door of the Officers chamber, Longo opens it, presenting himself to the armed companions with a kind and serene look on his face:

"Well?" says the Hobbit, *"Why have you come to me with such an aggressive disposition. If you tell me what it is that you want from me, I am sure we can come to an agreement."*

His voice is clear and musical, his tone benevolent. Longo is of course wearing his black scabbard, and his left hand is laid casually on his waist, to reveal it to everyone who is looking at him.

While appearing relaxed, the Hobbit is bending his will with all his force to swaying the companions' intentions and force them to come to a peaceful agreement.

- Any companion who wishes to act against Longo must make a Corruption test (TN 20). Only heroes who previously perceived the Hobbit's unusual power with an **Insight** roll the first time they met him are allowed to spend a Hope point to get an Attribute bonus.

- Companions who fail the roll become Miserable and view Longo as a trusted friend and leader. They may attempt the test again, but on a failure will have a Bout of Madness centred on saving their ally Longo from the treachery of the other heroes.

Longo

Attribute Level	
6	
Endurance	Hate
18	5
Parry	Armour
4+1 (buckler)	2d+1
Skills	
Personality, 3	Survival, 3
Movement, 3	Custom, 1
Perception, 3	Vocation, 2
Weapon Skills	
Dagger	3

Weapons:

Weapon type	Damage	Edge	Injury	Called Shot
Dagger	3		12	-

Longo's Lieutenants

Attribute Level	
4	
Endurance	Hate
16	3
Parry	Armour
4	2d+1
Skills	
Personality, 2	Survival, 3
Movement, 2	Custom, 1
Perception, 2	Vocation, 2
Weapon Skills	
Sword	2
Bow	2
Special Abilities	
No Quarter (lost if Longo dies)	

Weapons:

Weapon type	Damage	Edge	Injury	Called Shot
Sword	5	10	16	Disarm
Bow	5	10	14	Pierce

- Epilogue -

If Longo is defeated and captured alive, the company may bring the Hobbit before an official of Dale for judgement. Deprived of the Black Scabbard (it will have been taken from him, together with every weapon and belongings) Longo soon breaks and confesses his many crimes, pleading guilty and appealing to the mercy of the court. But the Hobbit has committed too many misdeeds to be pardoned, and will likely be imprisoned for the rest of his days. If Longo was killed and evidence that he was behind the attacks is presented, the city official has a hard time believing a Hobbit was Longo the Bandit-lord, but anyone with a high Standing rating in Dale (3 or higher) can make a **Persuade** roll to convince the official of the truth.

Katun will personally thank the companions and provide them 2 treasure apiece in gifts if they were friendly to her. If a patron set them on their path, the patron instead provides the reward and thanks the companions for making the roads safe for travellers and ending the cruel time of Longo the Bandit-lord.

Kelda, if alive, is grateful to the company and bids them take the Silver Needle: she senses that her time with the artefact has passed and all she wants now is quiet rest. But the wondrous artefact won't remain in their hands for long...

Just before the companions decide on the fate of the Needle, an envoy of the Elvenking arrives (or he comes himself). The Silver Needle once belonged to Celebrían, daughter of Celeborn and Galadriel, and wife to Elrond. Celebrían used it almost three thousand years ago to embroider the woven cloth she gave to Elrond on their wedding day, now hung above the high table of the Great Hall of Rivendell (see *Rivendell*, page 9). The messenger will make it clear that the Elves would like to have the Silver Needle back, for Arwen Evenstar, daughter of Elrond, in particular desires to have an heirloom of her mother. (Perhaps, years later, Arwen will use it to sew and embroider the banner that Aragorn will unfurl upon the fields of Pelennor).

What About the Black Scabbard?

The artefact itself can be destroyed by physical blows; however this does not end the curse. (The sheath or handle of the weapon used to destroy the artefact darkens, eventually turning black and gaining the powers of the Black Scabbard, affecting its wielder in the same way as it once worked on Longo.) To truly destroy the dark essence within, the item must be melted down in a fire that burns very hot indeed. The Dwarves of the Iron Hills have an ancient smelter that might do the job. Dragon-fire would certainly work.

- of hammers - and anvils

- **When:** The adventure is set in the summer or autumn of the year 2958.
- **Where:** The majority of the adventure is set in Dale, before briefly moving into the Northern Dalelands and finally ending in Erebor.
- **What:** The company assist the famed Dwarf Balin in investigating a number of troubling events and rumours disturbing the peace of Erebor and Dale.
- **Why:** A once-famous Dwarven craftsman fallen from grace will stop at nothing to reclaim his "stolen" glory. To restore the prestige he craves, even the death of many Dwarves and serious harm to Erebor would be acceptable.
- **Who:** Balin, son of Fundin, famed companion of Thorin Oakenshield on the Quest of Erebor is the company's patron for the adventure. Niping of the Iron Hills conspires against the Kingdom under the Mountain, with the help of Gunvar, a Barding petty-lord.

Adventuring Phase

This adventure is divided into six parts.

Part One - Like the Falling of Small Stones

Balin is rescued by the companions on the road to Dale. A group of men attacked him and his guards, and then left aboard a strange-looking boat along the river.

Part Two - A Grim Toy-market

While in Dale, the company learns that Balin has apparently been murdered in a second, successful attempt on his life. More troubling rumours and events taint the festive atmosphere of the toy-market.

Part Three - Uphill and Down Dale

The alive-but-in-hiding Balin engages the company to make inquiries in Dale about the mysterious events of the last few days. The heroes may find the first evidence of a conspiracy.

Part Four - An Interested Lord

The company's enquiries bring them to the attention of Gunvar, a lord of the Dalelands. He invites them to his manor where he attempts to persuade them to join him. Either acceptance or refusal lead to complications.

Part Five - In Deep Places

Gunvar's men slip through the roots of the Mountain to sabotage the Dwarven furnaces. The company must follow them into the depths in order to stop them.

Part Six - Treachery & Wisdom

If the conspiracy is neutralised, the companions are triumphant. Balin returns to shed light on the dark plots woven in the depths of Erebor.

Epilogue

The companions are rewarded for their loyalty to Balin.

The Doom of Niping the Smith

When Dáin son of Nain was not yet King under the Mountain, but still simply the Lord of the Iron Hills, the art of the smith Niping in the making of mining tools, delving engines and devices was considered unmatched. More than that, his work was vital to the life of the Dwarven community, and Niping and his apprentices walked as lords among their peers. No rock was hard enough for his thrice-tempered picks and hammers, they said, no vein too deep.

With the refounding of the kingdom of Erebor and the recovery of the treasure that the Dragon stole, Niping saw his fame stripped away from him: made rich and complacent, the Dwarves turned their heads away from the mines and furnaces of the Iron Hills, moving to the Lonely Mountain to dedicate themselves to trifling matters, like toy and jewel-making. The name of the once-celebrated smith sank toward obscurity.

Year after year, the smith's resentment has grown, especially after making the acquaintance of Lord Hakon, a Barding

noble who saw his own star sink below the horizon with the refounding of Dale. For his own reasons, the treacherous courtier has fed the embers of Niping's discontent with crooked words and unscrupulous counsel. Bitterness has turned to anger, rancour to hatred, and a dark plan has started to form in Niping's mind: if he and his art cannot reclaim their rightful position in the eyes of Durin's Folk, no one will. Niping would rather see the works of Erebor broken, its furnaces wrecked, than die forgotten in his cold mines.

Niping's Schemes

Today, the Dwarf-smith blames his current misfortune on the peace that Bard the Dragonslayer and King Dáin Ironfoot forged between the Dwarves and the Bardings. Niping is convinced that were the Dwarves still clinging to their ancestral lifestyle, they would have never forsaken their traditions to embrace their current frivolous pursuits.

To see his art awarded the recognition it deserves once again, Niping has set his mind to weakening and then severing the ties of friendship that unite Bard and Dáin. In the last few years, Niping has dedicated himself to building a loyal following among his fellow Dwarves of the Iron Hills, some of whom have become his agents. Inside the Mountain, Gundri and Sígar of the 'Stone Guard' also resent the importance of Dale and listen to the agents of Niping.

In Dale, Dwarven merchants owing their allegiance to Niping have arranged lucrative trades with petty lords, securing the support of a number of greedy Bardings. Thanks to Hakon's intercession, Lord Gunvar of Ashbrook has become Niping's chief agent, allowing the scheming Dwarf to act without fear of being held responsible.

- Part One -
Like the Falling of Small Stones

The adventure finds the companions travelling to Dale along the Merchant's Way, where it parallels the River Running, before it flows into the Long Lake to the south. It is late in the day, and they are still a few miles south of town, pushing themselves to make it to the city and its lodgings.

They might be going to Dale on personal affairs, for example to check out the rumours that have the markets flowing with the most exotic goods of late. In particular, stories abound of rare and prestigious wares brought from the East by many merchants who arrived last year.

The Boat

As they arrive in sight of the river from behind a sheltering hill, the companions spy a craft silently moving with the favour of the current, partially hidden by a mist rising from the river's surface. The heroes take notice of it as it is relatively unusual to see a southbound boat this late in the day, as it won't likely make it to Lake-town before sundown.

The boat is a large skiff, with eight rear-facing oarsmen. If a player proposes it, a successful roll of **Craft** (or the invocation of an appropriate trait like *Boating*) indicates that the boat looks similar to vessels built in Lake-town, if it wasn't for a large pair of eyes painted on the lower sides of its prow. A roll of **Awareness** notices also that the boat is manoeuvred using an unusually large steerboard (rudder), one that could belong to a small longboat.

Should the companions hail the boatmen, they receive no answer. As the boat moves opposite to the company, it disappears behind them as quickly as it made its appearance (if any companions attempt to follow it, the craft soon gains distance, as it moves with the current).

The Raven

Half a mile north from where they saw the passing boat, the companions have a strange meeting: a raven perched on a tree to the side of the road attracts their attention, croaking and flapping its wings. When the companions approach the raven, it takes flight, only to land a few yards away from the road. Should the companions follow, the bird takes flight again, until it lands on a rocky outcrop, about fifty yards away.

Reaching the outcrop, the companions arrive at the edge of a deep cleft, a narrow ravine filled with dense vegetation. A hero succeeding in an **Awareness** roll sees the body of a Dwarf at the bottom of the ravine, half buried in thick and thorny bushes: someone has fallen over the edge.

Climbing down the steep slope requires a roll of **Athletics** (the fall is 12 feet high). As they climb down, the companions start hearing a moaning sound: the Dwarf is alive!

Balin

With the help of the heroes, the fallen Dwarf is recovered from the ravine alive. He looks exhausted, and bleeds from a superficial cut to the side of his head. After a few minutes, he appears to regain his composure: the rescued Dwarf is none other than the famed Balin, son of Fundin, companion of Thorin Oakenshield on the great Quest for Erebor.

"We were heading for Lake-town, me, my squire and a bodyguard. They ambushed us on the road... a dozen ruffians. Men, all of them. Storr, the bodyguard, was the first to fall, pierced by a spear. My squire charged to engage them, urging me to escape."

"I fled, but they shot arrows at me. Many darts hit their mark, but I have a thicker skin than most Dwarves..." Balin opens his tunic to reveal a shiny corslet of close-set silver rings. *"When I fell over the cliff edge they must have thought I was dead."*

It is possible that the companions already know Balin, as he is a prominent personality of the kingdom of Erebor (see page 22 of the *Erebor* supplement for more on Balin). Moreover, the heroes could have taken part in the adventure of **The Marsh Bell** years before (*The One Ring Roleplaying Game*, page 286), in which case they do not simply know Balin, but they have rescued him before! If such is the case, Balin is overly delighted to meet the company once more, shaking his head at the wonder of it.

"You seem destined to be my friends in need, it seems. As good in a pinch as a Hobbit I know!"

If the company has never met him before, due to the circumstances Balin is certainly inclined to view them favourably anyway. Moreover, any past help that the company has rendered to Durin's Folk or the people of Dale will certainly be well known to him, as he sits on the King's Council of Erebor and often acts as an emissary for Dáin.

What Happened

Upon returning to the road, the companions can reconstruct what happened to Balin. The shaken Dwarf retraces his steps, and leads the heroes to the place where the fight with the ruffians took place. There are no bodies left on the ground, and it is easy to assume that the assailants must have dragged them away.

If the companions succeed in an **Explore** or **Hunting** roll, they find a series of tracks leading away from the road in the direction of the river. The tracks end at a shingly shore, where deep grooves on the riverside indicates that a boat was recently dragged on dry land: The ruffians must have been aboard the boat that the companions saw sailing past them.

Words on the Road

The companions must be on their way soon, if they want to reach Dale before the setting of the sun. Balin announces that he wishes to accompany them, forgoing his trip to Esgaroth; he thanks the companions for any assistance they will provide him (a spare pony, a place on the saddle behind another rider, etc.). On the way back, Balin doesn't add much to what he said so far. He notes sorrowfully that he will have to pass on word of the deaths of his travelling companions, and that he will complain to King Bard about the safety of his roads.

No matter how highly Balin thinks of the company, he won't give additional details about what he was really up to here (see **Dark Business**, page 29); if asked, he will just shake his head muttering, *"old Dwarvish business"* and say no more.

Instead, Balin asks about the company's doings of late, how they feel about the current events in Dale, and in Wilderland at large. He is keenly interested in the companions' past deeds, asking for accurate descriptions. The Loremaster should encourage the players to reinforce their narrative with skill rolls, for example using abilities like **Song, Courtesy, Awe** or **Persuade**.

- This is not just idle curiosity: it is apparent that Balin is assessing the company's worth, their motives, trustworthiness, and competence; the Loremaster should note the number of successes the company produces on any skill rolls during their talk with Balin, and set them aside until the end of the next part of the adventure.

At Traders Gate, the old Dwarf takes his leave and bids farewell to the companions. With a wink, he says *"You might hear disturbing news soon enough. Seek out my friend Thrun at the Toy-market once you do."*

- Part Two - A Grim Toy-market

The next Monday after the arrival of the companions in Dale is the first Monday of the month, and, as it is customary in town, it will be Toy-market Day. Rumour has it that this one will be particularly splendid, as a score of wonderful new toys will be presented to the public, and a good number of new merchants, including many foreigners bearing rare and exciting goods, are supposed to be in attendance. Companions in town should not miss the chance to visit the market that is called the "Wonder of the North".

Dark Tidings

Heroes walking around town on Toy-market Day soon realise that something is wrong. Many Dwarf crafters and traders encountered along the streets seem troubled. In the Market Square in particular, long faces abound. Even as they call out their wares, hawkers' voices lack the usual gusto, and the normally exuberant sounds of delighted children are somewhat muted. Many armed guards can be seen on the corners of the square, and moving through the crowd.

Questioning any of the passers-by, the companions discover the reason for such doom and gloom: word on the streets is that Balin, son of Fundin, emissary and advisor to King Dáin, died the night before, victim of murder!

This is not a case of confusion about the occasion the company aided Balin. This is a new attack, Balin being slain in Dale itself, so soon after surviving the previous attempt on his life.

The atmosphere is (unsurprisingly) dour and serious about the various Dwarven toymakers' stalls. Some manage a slight smile for their younger customers, but most are clearly distraught. Balin's murder, coupled with the news of the previous aggression along the river, is evidently putting every Dwarf on edge.

Characters enquiring after Balin's demise are met with a frown by any Dwarf (*"I have no wish to darken this bright market with such talk!"*), but the Dalish workers at the market are less sensible: should the companions ask, they discover that word has it that Balin was attacked while

passing through the Old Quarter late at night. None seem to know more than this.

Seeking Thrun

Before they leave the Market Square, the heroes notice that, despite the general gloom, quite a crowd has gathered about one stall in particular. Here, people are laughing heartily as they examine the wares on display. Upon approaching, they see a relatively young and lively Dwarf demonstrating the properties of some marvellous wooden boxes that open in different ways depending on how and where they are tapped, a series of interlinked rings that move about one another in a flowing dance, and small intricate dragons that writhe about one's fingers. The young Dwarf is named Thrun, and he is a toymaker of course. His work seems genuinely wondrous and deserving of the attention it receives.

But not everyone seems to agree on the worthiness of his work: two older Dwarves, smiths by the rough look of them, have started to comment loudly upon the work of the toymaker, belittling its relevance and using harsh words. Dwarven companions will instantly recognise them by their accent as coming from the Iron Hills, a subtlety caught by other companions only on a successful **Lore** roll.

Not content to bully a single toymaker, one of the Dwarves raises his voice, addressing all the other Dwarves in the Market Square able to hear him:

"You all should be ashamed of yourself, wasting your time on such trifling matters! Toys and trinkets! Only a few years ago you would have been the laughingstock of any Dwarf who ever set foot in a forge. Do you think it is of any value the praise you are getting from Men? An Orc is better at smithing than any Man!"

The crowd that gathered around the stall of Thrun rapidly scatters, as everyone prefers to put some distance between themselves and the two disgruntled Dwarves. The toymaker looks at the dispersing crowd, raising his arms in desperation:

"Look at what you have done now, all my clients gone! A plague on miners and their stiff necks!"

Upon hearing the toymaker's outburst, the two miners move to face him menacingly, with one of them stepping so close to Thrun that the beards of the two Dwarves touch. Blows are about to be exchanged!

Helping the Toymaker

Companions wishing to defuse the confrontation can try different things, anything from rolling **Awe** to counter the intimidating words of the two smiths, using **Persuade** to instil some sense in the arguing Dwarves, intoning a distracting **Song** to lighten the situation. If the companions fail their rolls or ignore the situation, a brief scuffle erupts, ending with Thrun falling and knocking over some of the crates he used to set up his display; he isn't injured, only bruised in body and spirit. Then, the two miners look about the market crowd in defiance and leave.

If the heroes succeed, the smiths end their outburst without resorting to any violence, leaving the heroes with a grateful Dwarf that might later be willing to speak more openly about what is going on (see page 30).

If the Loremaster deems that the companions handled the situation particularly well, for example employing pertinent traits, or producing a great or extraordinary result with a roll, the two Iron Hills smiths themselves will calm down and feel the need to elaborate a bit about

their discontent. From their words, it can be deduced that tension is building among the Dwarves, because of ongoing discussions within King Dáin's own Council. The smiths won't provide more details to outsiders, but a Dwarven companion can learn that the argument involves smithing traditions no longer being honoured in the forges beneath the Lonely Mountain.

"Today, we already cannot rival the metal-work of our fathers. At this pace, the secrets of our masters will be lost at the turn of a generation. And all this only for the sake of the gold of the Men of Dale? That gold that was ours in the first place..."

While most Free Folk would find the whole argument tedious, to Dwarven smiths it is a most serious matter indeed.

The Raven, Again

After the commotion provoked by the Dwarven smiths subsides, the companions will likely wish to speak with Thrun. He simply points to a raven perched on a nearby lamp post where an alley going east from the square leads to the Red Row. When the companions get closer, the raven salutes them croaking and flapping its wings. In a sense of déjà-vu, the bird looks definitely to be the same that led the companions to Balin!

Once recognised, the bird takes flight, landing on a statue in the middle of Red Row, before heading straight over Snapfire Alley. The raven eventually comes to rest at the top of a small building in the northern portion of the Old Quarter. Once the companions reach the spot, a small door on the front side of the building cracks open and a hand beckons from the shadows to bid them quickly inside.

"Well met again!" says Balin, son of Fundin.

- Part Three - Uphill and Down Dale

Balin leads the company into a dark antechamber, and then down a flight of steps, to a wide underground room furnished with sturdy wooden furniture and lit by beautiful Dwarven lamps that fill the room with light, but emit no smoke. He gestures about the room. *"One of the few structures that remained intact from Dale of old. Only a few old Dwarves know about it,"* he declares with a wink.

Dark Business

After the company has settled and Balin has passed about flagons of ale, he gets down to business.

"I have a confession to make. I didn't tell you everything last time we met, but I wasn't sure I could trust you. It was no mere misfortune that befell my friends and I. It seems clear that the ruffians didn't attack us to rob us, but were seeking us out with another purpose. Seeking me out, most likely. This is why I resolved to retreat from public appearances for the time being. If someone wants me dead, then I'm safer if they think it so."

"I wasn't going to Esgaroth on an ordinary business trip. I was investigating a rumour concerning a secret meeting of conspirators that I was told occurred on the road from Dale to Lake-town. I was surprised when the thugs attacked us. Since I confided my plans to only a few close friends within the Lonely Mountain, I fear I have been betrayed."

"Now, pretending to be dead will give me time to discover who is behind this, and it may indeed make them bolder and draw them from the shadows, but it severely limits my operations, as you can imagine! In Erebor I have a number of agents I can trust, but here in Dale I still haven't found someone up to the task. If you are willing to lend your eyes and ears to me for a while, there are a number of leads I wish to follow."

If the company has no interest in helping Balin, he will be both surprised and disappointed, but will send them on their way, asking them only to not discuss this business or his survival. Should the company agree to help the old Dwarf, he discloses what he knows.

Questions, Questions

Balin tells the company that months ago he began to feel worried at a tension rising in Dale, between the Bardings and the Dwarves of Erebor. What started as small quarrels between counsellors and envoys had steadily grown worse, to the point that in recent times every meeting of the King's Council seemed to have an endless list of litigations to address, having to do with arguments flaring

up between Dwarven craftsmen and Dale merchants and lords. Many in Erebor had started to openly speak against the *"ungrateful and scornful folk of Dale"*.

At first, Balin thought these troubles to be of minor concern, and typical of two neighbouring young kingdoms. Several weeks ago, that changed. Gundri, a veteran of the Battle of Five Armies belonging to the so-called 'Stone Guard' of Erebor got especially deep into his cups one night and was heard by many saying that the time was soon coming when, *"matters would be set right, between Hills and Mountain. And the greedy Mannish rabble will get theirs..."*.

Unsure at what his words could refer to, Balin resolved to question the guard, but Gundri failed to show up when summoned. He was eventually found dead, drowned in a fermenting keg in Stángard, in the very midst of Erebor.

Alarmed, Balin started a full-fledged investigation, but has since been grasping at shadows, thwarted at multiple turns. He was on the river the other night because his agents had intercepted a message that made Balin believe a "payment" of some sort was due to be passed between a Dwarf and other conspirators. The elderly statesman now suspects that his quarry was on to him and the "intercepted" message was, in fact a trap into which he fell.

The Task

Balin listens grimly if the companions tell him of the altercation at the Toy-market. He then asks them to make discrete inquiries about town. He is interested in discovering who attacked him, and who stands to gain the most from rising tensions between and within Dale and Erebor. Balin would like the company to find out what they can and report back what they have learned so far in a few days.

- If the company achieved 3 successes or less in their talk with Balin on the road to Dale, he offers them the equivalent of 5 Treasure apiece for their assistance, as well as his good will. If they achieved 4 successes or more, the offer is 10 Treasure and he will speak to King Dáin on their behalf.

The following entries detail what the company can learn in Dale, considering the players' most likely courses of investigation. It will take the heroes two or more days to seek out every piece of information, based on their choices and thoroughness.

The Toymaker's Tale

If the companions tried to help the toymaker at the square, Thrun will look for them, as he is worried by the recent events and Balin's news and subsequent need to disappear has disturbed him. The Dwarf might 'accidentally' bump into them as they are walking on the road right after having met Balin, or he might show up at their favoured inn one evening. When the encounter takes place, Thrun thanks them profusely for their intervention and invites them to meet him later in his workshop for a private chat...

The Loremaster can structure the meeting using the normal rules for encounters found on page 185 of *The One Ring Roleplaying Game*. Thrun the toymaker values Wisdom over Valour, and already knows and appreciates them for the help they tried to give him and Balin (add 1 to Tolerance, or 2 if they were successful).

The Toy Workshop

Thrun's workshop is on the ground floor of a building in Anvil Way. It's a wide, dark locale, filled with the intricate mechanisms of his many toys. Wheels and gears whirr and click constantly, and his workbench is lined with rows of brass calipers, numerous strange-looking pliers, and a multitude of hammers in all sizes. Drawings describing the design for various mechanical engines line one wall. On a table lies what looks to be the beginning of a magnificent toy dragon, wrought from gold and silver.

When the adventurers arrive, Thrun looks up from his workbench through a series of lenses that magnify his eyes to a ridiculously huge degree, before setting them aside.

"Welcome! Welcome! Oh-ho, so you came. I hope I haven't discomforted you too much with my invitation, but I think that what I have to say will be of interest."

Thrun bustles about clearing tools and bits of machinery off chairs so one or two companions at least have a place to sit.

"I am sorry if I disturbed you with my request to see you, but I feel I haven't adequately thanked you for your

help. Also, I wish to provide you with some explanation for the behaviour of my kinsmen. It's not my intention to excuse them for their aggression, but I have pondered the question and I think there might be more to it than a simple grudge."

"I feel that in recent years, Dwarves from the Iron Hills have watched the rising of the Kingdom of Erebor with mixed feelings. Where people like myself have found in it an opportunity to develop our craft beyond even the wildest dreams of our ancestors, others pity our ambition and consider our work to be nothing more than a meaningless waste of time, not befitting the cunning of our kind."

"It is thus understandable that those two poor lads from the Iron Hills feel such anger to see that jewellers and toymakers encounter success and prosper in their trade. All the more when to their eyes the honoured craft of the toolsmith languishes, forsaken and forgotten."

"But this is nonsense of course! There is now a wide world outside our mines and strongholds, and there will be always someone needing good tools, like hammers, pickaxes and mattocks. Why, several of my best tools came from Niping's forge!"

Niping, he states, is one of the best Dwarven smiths alive today, when it comes to good solid ironwork. He is one of the masters of Durin's Folk, deserving the respect and admiration of all Dwarves, but he is too tied to the old ways. He has made several public declarations criticising the work of the smiths of Erebor, dismissing them as unworthy of their trade. Judging from their words and provenance, the two disgruntled miners were certainly friends or apprentices to Niping.

Where is Niping?

Niping the smith resides in the Iron Hills, his ancestral home, surrounded by his faithful. He does not make an appearance in this adventure as written. He plays the part of the puppeteer, holding the strings but keeping himself in the shadows.

Thrun as an Informer

The primary reason that prompted Thrun to contact the companions is plain to see: the idea that someone could take his craft from him, for example barring him from working on toys and force him to return to the forge, is an unacceptable nightmare, one Thrun would do anything to prevent from becoming reality.

If the companions mention Balin, Thrun glances furtively about his workshop. *"Let him stay safely dead for now,"* he says. *"But I can help in other ways."* To further this end, he has something to give the companions: the toymaker disappears at the back of his workshop for a few moments, only to return unwrapping a parcel.

As he reaches the companions he holds out what looks to be a silvery mechanical bird, a thrush to be precise.

"This small mechanical friend of mine is a capable flier. If you let it go from anywhere around town or in its vicinity, it will fly straight back here, only to return to the precise spot from where you let it go if I rewind it and send it out

again. This way, you could deliver a message, writing on a small piece of parchment and tying it to the bird's leg: I will make sure the recipient will receive it. You could also tell anyone you wish to check here regularly for messages, I can keep a secret..."

Thrun the Toymaker

Seen in his working environment, Thrun is the very model of a Dwarven craftsman, obsessing with the minutiae of his creations and always aiming for ways to perfect his craft. Thrun has a very short beard for a Dwarf; his hair got snagged in his toys' mechanisms one too many times and so he sheared it short. His bright eyes twinkle when he talks and he talks a lot when he's not working.

Attribute Level: 5
Specialties: Smith-craft, Woodworking
Distinctive Features: Clever, Merry
Relevant Skills: Craft ♦♦♦♦, Lore ♦♦♦

Thrun's Marvellous Thrush

The mechanical thrush is wrought of silver and exceedingly intricate. A successful Craft roll against TN 18 will reveal the raven's feathers are in fact made of precious Mithril! The bird has an obvious key on its underside. Once the key is turned, the bird's eyes "blink", it extends its wings and leaps into the sky, wheeling about and then heading the right way.

Investigating the Boat

The Quays of Dale lie to the east of the Trader's Gate. Its docks are busy from the dawn to the setting of the sun, and boats of many shapes and sizes are moored to the various landings. At first sight, no craft seems to correspond perfectly to the one the companions remember seeing just before rescuing Balin.

If the companions look for help, catching the attention of the right person can be a daunting prospect in the hustle and bustle of the Quays. A hero already familiar with how business is conducted here (or who succeeds at a roll of **Courtesy**) will know to go to Halward, the present Reeve of the Quays.

Halward is a stout, dark-bearded fellow originally from Lake-town, performing his duties from a cabin near the South Quay. He is a busy man and has little time for questions, but a roll of **Persuade** or **Courtesy** will keep his attention for enough time.

If asked about the boat the companions saw before they met Balin on the road to Dale, Halward will remark that vessels matching the description are a common sight along the full length of the Running River:

"Typical Dorwinion boat, for navigating the marshes. Some like those as they are fast, but cannot carry much weight."

A question specifically mentioning the boat's unusually large steerboard, or the painted eyes on its prow, will jog his memory.

"Aye, on the South Quay, there was such a skiff. Now that you ask, it was a bit peculiar, its crew met with two men I'd take for servants of a Barding noble."

"They were wearing cloaks, and it was too dark to see well, I fear, but when they left the docks I noticed that one of them was wearing a red livery under the cloak."

The Dorwinion Connection

Companions from Dale, or succeeding in a **Lore** roll, know that if they wish to investigate the Dorwinion clue, they should probably go visit the Commons, the corner of the Residential Quarter of Dale where merchants and wanderers passing through town or waiting to find more stable housing in the city normally stay (see also *Erebor*, page 46). Here are the temporary accommodations of many merchants from the East, as well as traders and wine-sellers from Dorwinion.

Finding information among the brightly-coloured silk tents requires a roll of **Riddle** with TN 16; on a success, the companions are introduced to Katun, an Easterling merchant matriarch acting as head of the small community of Easterlings of Dale (if the companions befriended Katun in **The Silver Needle**, they do not need to roll – they are led to her directly).

Meeting Katun

Katun will be quite cautious with those she doesn't know, but open and cheerful with friends. If asked about the Dorwinion marsh boat, she says that a craft corresponding to the companions' description was reported stolen, only to be found abandoned a few days ago.

Whoever stole it tried to sink it by smashing a hole in its hull, but the currents pushed it into a shallow bend of the River Running and some hunters noticed it. Katun knows the original owner of the boat, a Dorwinion trader by the name of Gwion.

Gwion

With directions from Katun, Gwion is easily found. He is a middle-aged dealer in musical instruments, living in a house in the Residential Quarter. When the companions mention the stolen boat to Gwion, he can barely contain his rage – the boat was to be a gift to his younger son, who likes to go fowling on the River Running. One day the boat simply disappeared, and the dock authorities had no explanation to give! Now he will have to wait for a carpenter of Lake-town to repair the boat.

If the companions treat Gwion respectfully, before they leave, the merchant will hand them an envelope, stained with traces of mud. He says:

"When I pulled the boat out of the water I found this, stuck under the prow compartment. I was puzzled by it, see if you can figure its meaning."

The envelope is open and contains a letter written on plain parchment. Written in Westron it states:

The passage is almost complete. Make sure that your men are prepared.

There are no other markings, nor a signature. A **Lore** test against TN 16 indicates that the handwriting might belong to a Dwarf.

The Red Livery

Based on the information gathered on the quays, the companions might decide to ask around amidst the streets of Dale for petty nobles whose servants use a red livery. This course of investigation lets the heroes automatically single out three lords from the Dalelands; *Bryni, Lord of Strandburg; Gunvar, Lord of Ashbrook* and *Thegn Osgar*.

One successful **Riddle** roll (or the use of an appropriate trait) will reveal the general take of the average inhabitant of Dale on each of the three men. Each entry includes additional details that a hero may uncover with a higher degree of success.

- **Bryni, Lord of Strandburg** (see page 54 of the *Erebor* supplement) is a nobleman from the Northern Dalelands, in town to see if he can pick up any fancy new trinkets. King Bard granted him the village of Strandburg when Bryni was not yet twenty years old. He is now in his thirties, and the years have toughened him a bit, but he hasn't lost his desire to appear "lordly" to others. A great or extraordinary success reveals that the townsfolk considers Bryni to be no more than a vain and incompetent fool.

- **Gunvar, Lord of Ashbrook** (see page 36 for a full description) has come to visit the Toy-market, a personal tradition he has honoured since the refounding of the kingdom. Gunvar is known for his ambition and his aspirations to increase his prominence in the city. While his manor of Ashbrook is outside the walls, Gunvar spends the vast majority of his days in Dale. (Gunvar is involved in the disruptions in Dale and is one of the villains of this adventure.) A great or extraordinary success uncovers that many hold Gunvar to be exceedingly ambitious.

- **Thegn Osgar.** An older lord who was in Lake-town when it was attacked by Smaug in 2941. He was badly burned and his left arm was left withered. He is known for his dislike of Dwarves, as he blames their greed for the destruction of Esgaroth. Any superior level of success finds that most inhabitants of Dale regard Osgar as an extremely honourable man.

The Missing Scale

One of the most convenient spots for gathering information is certainly "The Missing Scale", a famed inn which sits on the southern edge of the Market Square (see page 43 of Erebor). A Loremaster may conveniently set the description of a particularly fruitful meeting in the common room of 'the Scale', under the gaze of the wrought-iron Dragon that inspired the inn's name.

Back to Balin

When the companions meet Balin again, he will listen attentively to what the heroes have to report. The actions that the Dwarf will take in the following hours are based on the amount of useful information he receives from the companions (see below).

The items of information that the heroes may report are:

- The heroes describe what Thrun the Toymaker told them about the quarrel between the smiths of the Iron Hills and those of Erebor. Balin is not surprised, but takes note.
- Niping is mentioned. Balin raises an eyebrow, as he knows the smith very well, and he had no reasons to doubt his loyalty so far.
- The information about the boat being a marsh skiff from Dorwinion is reported.
- Balin is shown the letter found in the boat.
- The heroes report the testimony about the red-liveried servants.
- The identities of the suspected Noblemen are revealed to Balin.

Balin tries not to betray any sentiment as the companions recount their findings, but a roll of **Insight** may reveal the following: if the companions have reported at least four information items out of the six listed above, then Balin appears determined to take action: the companions convinced him that something is indeed afoot. As one of his most trusted advisors, Balin is to confer with King Dáin in three days. The Dwarf encourages the company to learn anything else they can before his meeting, as he intends to present the King his suspicions.

- Part Four - An Interested Lord

The day following the company's last meeting with Balin, one companion is approached on the street by a man in a red livery showing a wavy blue band across a white field. A **Lore** roll reveals this as the coat of arms of Gunvar, Lord of Ashbrook. The messenger bears a missive that invites the heroes to meet with Lord Gunvar, as he has learned of their inquiries and believes that he has uncovered things useful for them to hear.

Ashbrook is about at one hour's ride to the west of Dale. If the group agrees to meet with Lord Gunvar, the messenger gives them precise directions, then he hurries off to tell his lord of their coming.

What if the Company Refuses?

If the heroes refuse to meet with Lord Gunvar, the messenger indicates that his Lord will be most upset, but takes their answer all the same. What happens next depends on the company. Do they stealthily follow after the messenger or continue to look for answers in the city? Regardless, Gunvar and Niping's plans will then proceed relatively unopposed. Balin may personally bring the company with him when he goes back to Erebor to reveal himself, but much damage will be wrought and it will be very difficult, if not impossible, to determine the true guilty parties, advancing Niping's plan considerably. If the company accompanies Balin, they may end up being called upon to help fight the fires that Niping's followers start in Erebor. (see 39 for details).

Off to Ashbrook

Ashbrook is a rich manor house, within an hour of the walls of Dale, encircled by a short border wall delimiting the lord's demesne. The building itself is dominated by a solid stone tower, once intended to keep bandits at bay.

When the companions arrive, they are met before the gates by guards and the doorwarden, who requests them to leave their weapons in his custody. If the heroes comply, they are allowed to enter and meet the Lord of Ashbrook.

Lord Gunvar

Gunvar is a tall man in his mid to later 40s, with black hair shot through with silver and sharp green eyes that miss little. His ambition and strong dislike for the current political situation in Dale has brought him to forge an alliance with Niping, as he thinks that the smith's schemes will undermine the stability of King Bard's rule. Gunvar's ultimate goal is to replace the current King with Lord Bakon, who he believes would make for a far better ruler than Bard.

Attribute Level: 5
Specialties: Dale-lore
Distinctive Features: Bold, Cunning
Relevant Skills: Courtesy ♦♦♦♦, Inspire ♦♦, Persuade ♦♦♦

An Encounter over Dinner

The companions are invited to take their place in the main hall of the manor house. A wooden table occupies the length of the hall, and wooden chairs with high backs are arranged along the two sides. As the heroes sit, a butler enters to fill the companions' cups with red wine, poured from an elegant glass decanter. When everyone is seated, Lord Gunvar enters and takes his place at the far end of the table, raising a crystal goblet.

"Welcome to Ashbrook. I invited you here because I think you and I are pursuing similar goals, and thus I wonder if we could help each other..."

It quickly becomes apparent that Gunvar is unaware of their connection to Balin and any suspicions they might have of him. He only knows that they have been asking questions about the relations between Dale and Erebor and has misinterpreted their intent. He is certain that Balin is dead and has no idea that the companions might be acting on the Dwarf's orders. This advantage should allow the companions several options for the encounter, for example they might 'play along', pretending to agree with Gunvar's resolutions and offer their help.

For his part, Gunvar's goal with this encounter is to assess the companions' potential as a threat or resource, and to eventually neutralise or employ them, as the time to undertake his action of sabotage approaches.

The Tolerance for the encounter is based on the highest rating between Valour and Wisdom, reduced by 2 (Gunvar is being cautious).

The Speech

Gunvar says that the companions need no introduction, as their reputation precedes them (he actually investigated them prior to the encounter). He instead introduces himself as a humble servant of the kingdom of Dale, blessed by a title and personal wealth allowing him to do something for his king.

Soon after the start of the dinner, Gunvar stands and starts pacing the hall, declaiming as if making a public speech.

"I have asked to meet you because I think that you can understand my concerns. The kingdom of Dale is a

young one, not more than an infant compared to our neighbours, the ancient realms of the Dwarves and Elves. But our lineage, our heritage, goes back in time for many centuries. We were here before Smaug, and here we are again, reborn from dragon-fire.

But what matters more is that if it weren't for our King there would be no kingdom under the mountain, and certainly the Woodland Realm itself would have been reduced to ashes by the Dragon's wrath.

Yet today our neighbours see us as inferior, and treat us as such. Years ago King Bard stood tall and demanded that we be given what was ours by right, but he is not that man anymore. Wizards and foreigners have weakened his will, and the Dwarves and Elves have seen it. They fear that the King's weakness will eventually put their interests in danger.

What is worse is that most of us refuse to see. We are blinded by greed, and are willing to let others take decisions for us, as long as we are allowed to get rich. Not everyone is blind though. Warriors like you and I see that there are many enemies threatening the kingdom, and not all of them are beyond our borders. We see and we act accordingly.

Listen, my guests," says Gunvar, now speaking in a softer, more accommodating voice. *"I said we, for we it may be, if you will join with me. Help me to strengthen the kingdom, for the sake of Dale in the first place, but also for Erebor and the Woodland Realm. A weakened throne isn't good for anyone in the region."*

Gunvar's Offer

The lord is offering the company a chance to join him in his efforts. Gunvar hints at a mission he will carry out this same night that they can be allowed to be part of, should they pledge their allegiance to him and his cause. The Loremaster must now adjudicate what happens next, based on the actions and words of the companions during the dinner. Here follow a number of possible outcomes, to be adopted based on how the companions conduct the encounter:

The Companions Play Dumb

The companions try to downplay their involvement and their knowledge of what is going on, in an attempt to convince Gunvar that they are incompetent, uninterested or harmless, or a combination of the three.

- To pull this off, the companions need to accumulate at least 5 successes before Tolerance is exceeded. The main suggested skills are **Riddle** and **Persuade**, and all rolls are against TN 16 (Gunvar is *Cunning*).

If the companions succeed, Gunvar is convinced that the heroes are no more than inept fools, and that they do not represent a threat to his schemes. He lets them go, being careful not to give them any inkling about his plans. This allows the heroes to keep a watch on the manor should they intend to do so, and eventually witness the mustering of Gunvar's men (see overleaf).

An Uneasy Alliance

The companions lie to Gunvar, pretending to agree with him and accepting his offer to join him (the deception causes each hero to gain 1 Shadow).

- To convince Gunvar, the companions need to accumulate at least 6 successes before Tolerance is exceeded. The main suggested skills are again **Riddle** and **Persuade** against TN 16.

If they succeed in the prolonged action, Gunvar compliments them for their wisdom and discernment. He then proceeds to reveal his plan for the immediate future: by the break of dawn, Gunvar and a selected group of men will take action and do something that will finally set many gears in motion; a demonstrative action that will shake the foundations of the realm. Will they be part of it?

The Company is Imprisoned

Failing to convince Gunvar one way or the other, or refusing his offer outright leads to imprisonment. Guards enter the dining hall at a signal from Gunvar and the heroes are taken to several cells in the lower portion of the manor.

The lord of Ashbrook orders his men, (Men-at-Arms and Bodyguards, see page 41), to keep the companions under lock and key until further notice.

Gunvar intends to keep them in his prison cells at least until the sabotage of the furnaces of Erebor is accomplished. Later in the same evening, though, the companions hear raised voices. Gunvar is speaking with someone (Lord Hakon) who is outraged at Gunvar's rash action. The voices are distant and muffled — it is impossible to know who Lord Gunvar is speaking with. The newcomer demands that Gunvar send his men to Erebor immediately and set their plans in motion, even if earlier than intended. *"I will send a message to inform our Dwarf friend. Leave them to rot. After tonight nobody will miss them."*

At this point, the company will doubtless decide that the time has come to flee. The players will certainly come up with several plans, and the mustering of Gunvar's men in the hours preceding the dawn could be the occasion they were waiting for:

- The Loremaster can improvise a fully detailed escape from the manor or could use a prolonged action if time is of the essence. This requires 9 successes (**Athletics**, **Battle**, **Explore**, **Riddle** or **Stealth**) and the heroes will face two Men-at-Arms before the end for each failure they accrue.

If the companions manage to flee, they recover their weapons from the doorwarden's closet and slip out of Ashbrook.

The Mechanical Messenger

Thrun the Toymaker's marvellous mechanical thrush (see page 32) can come in handy in whatever circumstance the companions may find themselves. In particular, the bird could be employed to carry a message to warn Balin of Gunvar's intention to do something against Erebor; if this happens, Balin could be forewarned and prepared for what's coming. However, Dale is a great distance away and the bird might not succeed...

- Part Five - In Deep Places

The men of Lord Gunvar, about thirty men, assemble before his manor a couple of hours before the breaking of dawn. They are all on horseback, wearing cloaks concealing their arms and armour. Gunvar intends to lead them to Erebor and enter the Lonely Mountain using a secret path that has been prepared for him by Niping.

- If the companions have kept a watch over the manor, they can follow Gunvar and his men until they enter the Mountain.

- If they have accepted Gunvar's offer and convinced him of their sincerity, they are given a cloak each and a mount, should they lack one. The Lord of Ashbrook tells them only to be ready, as what they are going to do will test their mettle and determination.

- If the companions were imprisoned, when they finally break free they will be able to follow the tracks of Gunvar's men.

The following paragraphs describe the path chosen by Gunvar and his men and their actions: the Loremaster can use the information provided to adapt it to the course of action chosen by the players.

To Erebor

On the northeastern side of the Lonely Mountain there is a large field of scree filling a narrow valley. The scree was carefully placed by Niping and his followers to hide a fissure in the mountainside that was once used as a narrow vent for mining gases. Niping's Dwarves have secretly enlarged the fissure, connecting it to a disused tunnel leading deep under Erebor.

A couple of hours after leaving Ashbrook, Gunvar and his men reach the field of scree and enter the concealed fissure.

Into the Depths

The tunnel used by Gunvar wends down deep into the roots of the Mountain. Sections of it are natural, while others have been clearly opened or enlarged artificially. At times, acrid fumes fill the hollows, and water trickles down the

passage: clambering over the many jagged edges within the roughly hewn tunnel for what seems to be long hours is exhausting (companions must pass an **Athletics** test or lose a Success die worth of Endurance points).

The Abyss

The passage eventually comes to a large crevasse that stretches across the path. A large stone has been purposefully placed across the chasm as a bridge, and under it lies a bottomless gulf of inky blackness. Sounds echo from unnerving directions, and a sickly sweet stench rises from the depths.

Whoever attempts to cross the stone bridge must pass a Fear test or be daunted as long as they remain underground (daunted heroes cannot spend Hope points).

The First Forge

Eventually, the tunnel reaches the Lower Halls of Erebor, not where the great underground city of Stángard lies, or where Thorin Oakenshield sleeps his eternal sleep, but where the fires feeding the furnaces of Durin's Folk are kept burning day and night (see *Erebor*, page 14).

A Dwarf of the Lonely Mountain will instantly realise where they are: in the proximity of the First Forge, a series of vast furnaces where the bulk of the ore extracted from below the Mountain is smelted. While there are many forges within Erebor, the one they stand within is considered one of the "pillars" of the Kingdom under the Mountain.

The din made by the unceasing toil of the Dwarves and the labouring of their great engines is deafening like the wind in a stormy sea, and men must yell to be heard. Here is where Gunvar intends to bring his plan to fruition.

Sabotage!

When they enter the vast, cavernous hall housing the First Forge, Gunvar and his men set about sabotaging the smelting furnaces and the engines employed to refine the precious metals. The Dwarven labourers and smiths working the night shift cry out in outrage, but are quickly rounded up by the armed saboteurs and imprisoned in a nearby chamber.

In a few moments, billows of dark smoke begin to fill the air. It seems that Niping's plan is working perfectly, and the companions are the only ones who can do something about it. Or are they?

Balin's Counterplan

While the companions were investigating on his behalf, Balin has been busy piecing together the parts of the puzzle the heroes and his agents have been providing him. In particular, the effectiveness of Balin's countermeasures to Niping's plan will be based on how much information the companions have brought him so far.

1. If all the available information has been brought to the attention of Balin, AND he has been warned of Gunvar's imminent action using the mechanical thrush, then, moments later, a contingent of Dwarven warriors from the 'Stone Guard' surprises Gunvar and his men in the First Forge and surround them, forcing the treacherous Lord to surrender. Balin himself appears after 2 rounds, fully armed and masked and thus incognito, to capture Gunvar alive.

2. If Balin received all the available information but wasn't warned by the thrush, then a group of warriors from the 'Stone Guard' has been warned to stand on alert, but will intervene only if the companions sound the alarms (see below), arriving on the scene after **four rounds**.

3. If Balin has received *at least* four information items out of the six listed on page 35, the Dwarf has contacted Dwalin, telling him of his suspicions. From that moment Dwalin has taken to making an extra tour of patrol himself, and will intervene with his men after **six rounds** if the companions sound the alarms (see below).

4. If Balin has received less than four out of six of the information items listed on page 35, then Balin has been unable to prepare anything and Erebor is caught by surprise by Gunvar's initiative: the companions must sort the situation out by themselves, as even sounding the alarms allows Gunvar to escape the Mountain without opposition.

Sounding the Alarms

Since the forges of Erebor are dangerous places, prone to all sorts of accidents, great bells, gongs and huge horns are distributed across the length of the hall housing the furnaces. Getting to them unseen requires a **Stealth** roll against TN 16.

The first alarms the company try to use prove to have been disabled – further proof of treachery within Erebor. It takes an additional **Stealth** roll to move unseen to a new alarm.

Companions that fail either of their **Stealth** rolls are in for a running battle through the forges as they search for an alarm to sound while Gunvar's men attack them. Each companion can either fight back, or take a Defensive stance without attacking, instead making **Search** rolls as they desperately seek a new alarm to try.

Fighting Gunvar in the Forges

Unless Gunvar and his men are ambushed and captured by Balin and the 'Stone Guard' warriors, the company will have to bring the fight directly to the Lord of Ashbrook and his men at some point or another.

- Gunvar has 20 men-at-arms of his personal retinue at his side, plus 10 hand-picked warriors serving as his bodyguard. Luckily for the companions, most of them are out of earshot sabotaging the furnaces, and thus no more than 4 men-at-arms plus 2 bodyguards can face the companions at a time.

The entries listed above indicate for how long the company has to fight, before the 'Stone Guard' or Dwalin arrives to capture Gunvar and his men. If no one is coming (see entry 4), then the companions will have to defeat the saboteurs alone, let them escape from Erebor unchecked, or die in the attempt to stop them.

- Players rolling **Battle** to get bonus success dice as combat advantages in the First Forge roll against an easy difficulty (TN 12), thanks to the many opportunities to use the many crucibles, carts filled with ore or slag, and other elements of the battlefield to their advantage.

Gunvar's Men-at-Arms

Attribute Level	
3	
Endurance	Hate
12	2
Parry	Armour
4+2(shield)	3d+1
Skills	
Personality, 1	Survival, 2
Movement, 1	Custom, 1
Perception, 2	Vocation, 2
Weapon Skills	
Sword	2

Gunvar's Bodyguards

Attribute Level	
4	
Endurance	Hate
16	3
Parry	Armour
4+2(shield)	3d+1
Skills	
Personality, 1	Survival, 2
Movement, 1	Custom, 1
Perception, 2	Vocation, 2
Weapon Skills	
Sword	2
Special Abilities	
Reckless Hate	-

Weapons:

Weapon type	Damage	Edge	Injury	Called Shot
Sword	5	10	16	Disarm

- Part Six - Treachery & Wisdom

The conclusive part of the adventure assumes that the companions have succeeded in thwarting the sabotage attempt, and that Gunvar and his men have been subdued, in one way or another.

When peace and order is restored in the great hall of the First Forge, King Dáin himself enters the scene, surrounded by his mattock-wielding Iron Guard. If he knows the company from past adventures, he looks briefly surprised to see them in the depths of Erebor, but immediately demands to know what is going on.

At this opportune moment, Balin reveals himself by removing his helm (or by arriving at the scene if he wasn't present), shocking everyone. All dignitaries (the King and Dwalin if he is there) are both astounded and visibly moved to see their friend alive and well.

Without further ado, Balin orders the guards to put all outsiders in chains, inviting the companions to join him by his side. Nevertheless, Dáin demands that all present come to the Great Chamber of Thrór at once and explain themselves. But Balin intervenes:

"My King, please let us assemble in the Great Hall of Thráin, here in the Lower Halls. I know you don't favour the place where the Dragon used to sleep, dreaming of the butchery he committed against our kin, but what we have to discuss is not well suited to our hall of feasting and council."

After a moment of hesitation, Dáin accepts Balin's suggestion, and guards and prisoners assemble in a throng. If the 'Stone Guard' was not already present, then Sígar, a Dwarf loyal to Niping, slips in amidst the assembly.

Before the King

Balin swiftly questions the company about what has transpired since last they spoke. He presents what he knows about the Dwarven traitor to the King under the Mountain.

If the company managed to keep Lord Gunvar alive, he does not know the name of the Dwarf he has been working with, but he has learned more than Niping realised. Depending on their investigations, the company may well be able to make a fair guess at who might be involved, at least enough to bring up Niping's name...

Niping Exposed!

Once it is clear that Niping is the traitor, the King sighs. "The Iron Hills are far away. But I will send for him... he will answer for his plotting." At this, Sígar can take no more... he draws a sword and charges screaming at Gunvar. The company may have suspected this and attempt to intervene, but unless one or more of companions deliberately stated that they were keeping an eye on Sígar, he strikes down Gunvar before being slain himself by the Iron Guard.

If Lord Gunvar survives, he'll offer that for fair treatment, he'll impart information that could lead to other conspirators. King Dáin orders him taken away. Gunvar won't survive Erebor's prison – one of his own men loyal to Hakon will ensure he swiftly dies in captivity before he can reveal Lord Hakon's involvement.

No Proof!

If the company failed to provide evidence of the conspiracy (and Gunvar died in the battle) then they are likely to be held responsible along with the rest of Gunvar's men for the damage to the Grand Forges, a particularly serious crime within Erebor. Thankfully, Balin intercedes on their behalf. Despite Balin's vote of confidence, failure here reflects badly on the group and they all lose 1 Standing when dealing with Dwarves of Erebor until such time as their actions can rectify their mistake.

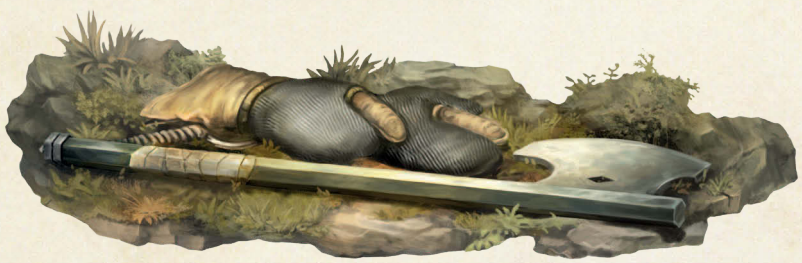
No matter what suspicions they have about who was behind this, their lack of proof leaves Niping at large. His next move will depend on the campaign. Surely Balin will be suspicious of him but can do very little. The smith will certainly be planning vengeance on the company...

- Epilogue -

Once the aftermath of the destruction has become clear, while cheered by the return of Balin, Erebor mourns the death of several members of their 'Stone Guard' and labourers of the First Forge.

Balin, Dwalin and Dáin are hugely grateful to the fellowship for helping in such a delicate matter, even if not all goes well. If the matter of the traitor goes unresolved, Dáin is publicly angry with the company, but wishes them well in private, citing "Dwarven politics" as the problem.

In addition to whatever Balin promised the company, if they exposed Niping, the King rewards each companion with a small bag of gems worth 10 points of Treasure each.



- to Dungeons - Deep

- **When:** The adventure is set in 2959, in early Autumn.
- **Where:** The company goes west from Dale to the Grey Mountains Narrows, then visits the remnants of the kingdom of the Last Lord of Dale in the northern Waste.
- **What:** Events concern those who seek a treasure mausoleum and, in particular, a coat of Dwarf-linked rings that once was commissioned by Girion before the coming of Smaug.
- **Why:** The adventure begins with a scholar going missing. The heroes are summoned, and tasked with going to the rescue.
- **Who:** The company meets Thegn Jofur, a Barding dignitary, then goes seeking for the missing scholar, a famous Dwarf from the Blue Mountains by the name of Domi. In time, other dignitaries will make their appearance.

Adventuring Phase

This adventure is divided into six parts.

Part One - At the Court of the Grieving King

Here the company meet Bard's self-appointed chief counsellor, Thegn Jofur. They learn that Domi, a famous Dwarf scholar from the Blue Mountains, has gone missing while travelling to Dale. Later, they may meet Dwalin, inquiring about the fate of the same studious Dwarf.

Part Two - To the Grey Mountains Narrows

The company goes west looking for Domi. They find a member of Domi's party in need of rescue, and learn where the Dwarven scholar may have gone.

Part Three - Hunters in the Waste

The company must travel into the Waste to seek Domi, who has been abducted. The kidnappers are sellswords seeking the same treasure Domi was looking for, and are joined by allies most dire.

Part Four - The Mausoleum

The heroes uncover the lost mausoleum, but soon discover that there are worse things than Orcs and brigands on the Waste.

Part Five - Wings of Iron

When the heroes emerge from the mausoleum laden with gold and jewels, they will have to face a storm of iron! Out of the north comes revenge, riding wings of terror.

Part Six - Clouds Gather, Again

The company meet with armed representatives of the Bardings and the Dwarves of Erebor, spurred into action by mysterious letters. Tensions threaten to erupt when the Dwarves and Bardings both lay claim to the treasure.

Epilogue

A wandering Wizard and his friend take council with the company, to learn both the secrets of the past and the dangers of the present.

Secret Letters

Last summer, Domi, a famed Dwarven scholar from the Blue Mountains, made a great discovery while researching the annals of the Kings of Durin's Folk: in an abandoned depository in the western Halls of the Dwarves Domi found a travelling chest bearing the sigil of King Thrór of Erebor. Apparently, the case was left behind after a royal visit, and thus saved from the ruin of Smaug.

Opened, the chest was found to contain a thick bundle of letters, the correspondence between King Thrór and Girion, Lord of Dale. Among many items of interest was a missive from Girion, describing his intention to employ a group of Dwarven stonemasons for the building of a mausoleum in the Northern portion of his realm, for the purpose of *"...receiving the mortal remains of my beloved eldest, who as you know died prematurely of a fever he contracted in Mirkwood. He loved the frontier and will rest forever there."*

Forgotten Secrets

Centuries ago, before the Dragon came, Girion, Lord of Dale, gave a necklace of five hundred emeralds to the Dwarves, as payment *"...for the arming of his eldest son in a coat of dwarf-linked rings the like of which had never been made before..."*. Everyone in Dale and Erebor knows how King Dáin found the necklace in the Dragon's hoard and restored it to Girion's heir, King Bard, who in turn gave it to the Elvenking as a gift after the Battle of Five Armies.

What no one remembers is what happened to the coat of mail that the Dwarf-smiths forged. Legend says it was a wondrous artefact, *"...wrought of pure silver to the power and strength of triple steel."* Perhaps it still lies buried in the Northern Dalelands, hidden in the mausoleum that Girion built, along with the remains of the Lord of Dale's unlucky son?

The Coat of Silver Mail

The mail coat of the son of Girion was first translated in game terms in *Rivendell*, page 108, as part of the treasure reclaimed by Thorin's company at the end of the Quest of Erebor. If this particular information has been introduced in a campaign (for example, the companions met Balin and he was described as wearing the Coat of Silver Mail) then the Loremaster can specify that Domi also found proof that the son of Girion was buried with the famed coat of mail, and that the one that Balin has is but an essay of the armour-smiths of ancient Erebor before they completed the final product.

Type: Coat of Mail
Craftsmanship: Dwarven
Banes: n/a
Qualities:
1. Ancient Cunning Make 2. Ancient Close-fitting
3. Rune-Scored Armour

At the end of summer, Domi wrote to King Bard informing him of his discovery and announcing his intention to come to Dale to confer with him, as the matter directly concerns Bard, the heir of Girion by right of descent.

Soon after, the scholar sent another letter to King Dáin Ironfoot, requesting the King's permission to meet the stonemasons of the Lonely Mountain: it is the scholar's hope that their ancient records will allow him to pinpoint the location chosen by Girion for the burial site of his son.

Secrets Stolen

Lord Hakon, the devious courtier of Dale conspiring against King Bard (see below), has many informers, and it took only a day for one of them to deliver him a copy of the letter sent to Bard. It didn't take much for him to envision the negative diplomatic repercussions that poor handling of the matter of the treasure of Girion would bring.

After a brief meeting with the Sorcerer of Forod, a new plan for the ruin of Dale and Erebor has been made: first, Lord Hakon will retrieve the records of the stonemasons of Erebor with the help of a new servant that Morlach has placed under his command – a cunning Snaga tracker, expert in sneaking into forbidden places. Then, he will send the Snaga and a group of armed men to intercept Domi on the road to Erebor, to capture him. Hakon is certain his men will be able to locate the mausoleum of Girion, travel there, and take any treasure there contained. In the meantime, he will busy himself in preparing a final, iniquitous act: pitting Bardings and Dwarves one against the other for the possession of Girion's treasures.

King Bard in 2959

Beginning with the tragic events narrated in The Darkening of Mirkwood for the year 2956, King Bard has become fey and withdrawn, turning increasingly grim as his years lengthen. By the year 2959 much of the royal business is handled by courtiers and lordlings while the King broods. Within the last year, a minor noble, Thegn Jofur, has become one of the King's chief counsellors, competing with Lord Hakon for premiership. Though not formally appointed to the role, the two courtiers carry the greater part of the burden of running the kingdom whilst the King grieves. On his part, King Bard obviously welcomes Jofur and Hakon's presence and the help they provide.

- Part One -
At the Court of the Grieving King

The adventure begins when the heroes respond to a summons from King Bard to attend him in his palace. If the company has ever seen the throne room before, they find it a darkened place now. The glass lamps that light the main hall have been turned low and it takes a while to adjust to the gloom.

When they reach the raised dais where the throne sits, the companions find it empty. They are greeted by Thegn Jofur instead, sitting on a chair set beside Bard's vacant seat. The Barding is a portly man in his late thirties, with fair hair and the red cheeks of someone who is either easily excited or overly fond of a good drink.

A Plea for Help

The courtier stands up when the heroes approach, and greets them.

"Welcome, friends. You have been summoned here on a personal invitation from King Bard, on account of previous services that you paid to the realm in the past. I have heard of your exploits myself, and I am honoured to make your acquaintance.

It is not easy to meet individuals that do not place their personal gain above all else... These are darkening days, and we have need of men like you, to light our way out of the murk. I am Jofur, son of Jormund, a humble servant of the King."

Jofur's manner of speech is pompous and elaborate, and it is difficult to say whether this is because he is unaccustomed to speaking in public, or if he is being sarcastic and mocking the companions (an **Insight** or **Riddle** roll reveals that Jofur is either honest to the point of being naive, or he is a consummate orator).

Playing Thegn Jofur

Thegn Jofur's benevolent aims have been delineated on page 6 of the Introduction. For the purpose of roleplaying his part, the Loremaster should keep in mind that it is the combination of Jofur's haughty manners and unadventurous spirit that make him appear foul, even if his intentions are fair.

In this particular occasion, Jofur is obeying a direct order from King Bard, who has personally asked for the heroes to be summoned. If it was up to him, he wouldn't have resorted to asking the assistance of individuals he considers not much more than sellswords. Jofur doesn't know the companions yet, but he doesn't have any loyal servants with the required talents and mettle for the mission and must thus trust the King's opinion. He knows well the sensitivity of the task, as handling it badly might endanger the relations between Dale and Erebor.

Thegn Jofur

Attribute Level 5
Specialities: Dale-lore
Distinctive Features: Cunning, Suspicious
Relevant Skills: Insight ♦♦♦, Persuade ♦♦♦♦, Riddle ♦♦♦

Set Tolerance

Bard has indeed asked for the heroes personally, and Jofur has no reasons to doubt the choice of his King, but he

will make up his mind on them based on the outcome of the encounter nonetheless. Jofur normally prizes Wisdom over Valour, but the Thegn is keeping his cards close to his chest, so for this encounter the initial Tolerance is set equal to the highest rating among Valour or Wisdom in the company, increased by 2 for the King's intercession (additionally, take into account the highest Standing of either a Barding or a Dwarf of Erebor).

Introduction

An introduction is not strictly necessary as Jofur is aware of who the companions are. Should the heroes desire to ask Jofur about the absence of the King, or to make polite inquiries about his well-being, now would be the right time.

On a successful roll of **Riddle** or **Courtesy**, Jofur tells the heroes that King Bard could not attend the meeting because he didn't feel well this morning and that he is seeing his physician. On a great or extraordinary success, the Thegn confesses that the king has not been feeling well for some time, and that Bard's personal sorrows threaten the kingdom.

Interaction

After dealing with the opening questions, Jofur jumps to the heart of the matter, assuming a serious and confidential tone:

"An important Dwarven scholar was expected to arrive in Erebor from his home in the Blue Mountains. He was to be a guest of King Bard and sent a letter before leaving, describing his intended route and estimating a date for his arrival. He is now a week late, and we fear that some accident might be the cause of the delay.

What the King requires of you is simple, and appropriate to your abilities. Find the Dwarf, rescue him if he is in danger, and bring him to court, for he has important matters to relate to the King."

The companions at this point might wonder what had a Dwarven scholar to do with King Bard, and will probably want to know more about the matter at hand. Thegn Jofur does not intend to tell them everything right away though; they have yet to gain his trust.

Using skills such as **Insight, Persuade** and **Riddle** will let the heroes get more information out of Jofur, apparently unwillingly. Compare the number of successful rolls the companions achieve with the entries given below. When the Tolerance of the encounter is exceeded, Jofur will give no further information, ending the audience soon thereafter.

The entries below indicate Jofur's answers and his estimation of the company, based on the number of successes they accrued.

1. (Narrow Success): Jofur wonders if King Bard made an error of judgement. Jofur mentions the minimum amount of information needed for the expedition to succeed; finding Domi and bringing him back will gain the companions gold amounting to a total reward of 5 Treasure along with the gratitude of the King.

2-4. (Success): Jofur lets it slip that the Dwarves could be interested, by saying he is prepared to match any offer the Dwarves make. He adds that Domi wrote to both King Bard and King Dáin Ironfoot, but he stresses the fact that the business that was bringing the scholar to Dale was with King Bard.

5-6. (Great Success): Jofur admits that a group of Dwarves from Erebor are currently making inquiries in Dale. To reinforce his position, he tells the companions that what Domi was researching concerns the royal line of the Lords of Dale.

7+. (Extraordinary Success): Jofur seems to surrender to the inquisitiveness of the companions and adds that the research of Domi concerns a lost mausoleum, built by Dwarves but supposedly containing heirlooms of the line of Girion.

Inquisitive Dwarves

The Dwarves of Erebor making enquiries in Dale are a dozen armed veterans from the Stone Guard, led by Dwalin, brother of Balin. The old Dwarf is in town to find Domi; he knew the scholar was expected by King Bard, and came to persuade him to come to the Lonely Mountain before striking any deal with the Bardings. He is not yet aware that the scholar has gone missing.

The Interrogation

Heroes approaching Dwalin about the matter at hand soon find themselves the object of an interrogation, as the Dwarf will immediately try to find out what they know of Domi and his mission.

He won't be subtle about it, as Dwalin is not a cunning courtier, nor a skilled orator - he is a warrior, and he is not afraid of making enemies out of the companions, if need be. The presence of the twelve Stone Guards should be enough to persuade any hero to oblige him.

Dwalin will direct his questions to one companion, either the one who offers himself as the spokesperson for the company, or the hero with the highest Valour score. Dwalin will ask many things, summarised here in three questions, each to be resolved in sequence as opposed actions (see *The One Ring Roleplaying Game*, page 148), pitting Dwalin's **Awe** directly against the same skill of the interrogated companion.

Companions wishing to withhold information in their answers may roll **Riddle** in place of **Awe**, but a failed roll will warn Dwalin that the hero is either lying or not saying everything (Dwalin is *Suspicious*). If this happens, then the Dwarf will say nothing, but will consider the companions to be enemies.

The three questions are:

- *Where is Domi?*
- *What have you been tasked to accomplish?*
- *What is Bard looking for?*

If the companions lose an opposed roll, then their answer must be truthful and complete, to the full extent of their knowledge of the facts. If they win a roll, they can choose to answer truthfully, refuse to say a word, or give just a partial answer. A hero can also choose to lie, regardless of the roll results, but every intentional lie gains the hero 1 Shadow point.

Dwalin's Conclusions

At the end of the interrogation, the Dwarf will have an opinion on the companions as far as the matter at hand is concerned, based on the answers they provided to his questions.

To judge what they say from the point of view of Dwalin, the Loremaster must consider that, as Dwalin sees it, the ownership of any treasure to be found in the mausoleum is a matter that should be discussed by Dwarves in Erebor first. If the companions find this debatable, Dwalin will conclude that they are agents of Bard and won't disclose any further information to them. Dwalin also cautions the heroes not to even think about keeping any Dwarven treasure for their own. If there are Dwarves in the company, he will warn them about the punishment that a traitor deserves.

In general, if the companions answered his question truthfully (or at least convincingly so), then Dwalin will see them as trustworthy, even if they are working against his interests. If they lied to him or withheld information and Dwalin is aware of it, then he will consider them treacherous. (Dwalin's opinion of the companions will have a bearing on the conclusion of the adventure – see page 61).

Dwalin the Warrior

The brother of Balin is no statesman, preferring a keen axe rather than honeyed words.

Attribute Level 6
Specialties: Erebor-lore, Orc-lore
Distinctive Features: Hardened, Suspicious
Relevant Skills: Axe ♦♦♦♦, Awe ♦♦♦♦
Endurance: 25

- Part Two -
To the Grey Mountains Narrow

The majority of travellers coming from the west heading for the Dalelands choose to avoid braving the depths of Mirkwood. They take the longer path leading round the forest to the north, across the slopes of the Grey Mountains, deeming it to be less dangerous. Unfortunately for Domi, the perils of the Grey Mountains Narrows proved to be enough to bring his journey to an abrupt end.

There isn't much choice for the companions if they wish to investigate the fate of the Dwarven scholar: they must trace the route he was supposed to follow, first finding that grey road that starts in the Northern Dalelands and heads towards the East Gap of the Narrows.

The Journey Begins

The journey to the East Gap of the Grey Mountains Narrows covers 100 miles across green hills and pleasant dales, dotted with many farms and villages. This leg of the trip takes 5 days. Each companion must make 2 Fatigue tests.

Hazard Suggestions

Once known as the Desolation of Smaug, this region grows more prosperous every year, the shadow of the Dragon now only a distant memory. But memories may sometimes return unexpectedly, as the following Hazard examples for the Loremaster to use demonstrate.

The Weather Takes a Nasty Turn (Scout, Fatigue)
It's been raining for days, and the green, hilly landscape of the Dalelands looks less pleasant when your boots are heavy with mud and your cloak is full of water. The scout of the company must pass an **Explore** test, or add fatigue again (twice on an).

The Ruin (All Companions, Despair)
The companions pass a broken-down ruin by a placid pool. By the edge of the water are the fresh remains of a Man and a Dwarf (not Domi but another unfortunate traveller), laying in positions that indicate their final acts were to drink from the pool. The heroes must pass a Corruption test or lose a point of Hope (2 points on an).

A Long Shuddering Howl

After a few miles into the East Gap, the heroes see a fire to the south of the path as they set up camp for the evening. As they approach, they hear the howling of wolves. The wild beasts are circling a lone, barren tree, trying to get to a young man who climbed on top of it and who is desperately fending off the wolves using a flaming branch.

To save the man the companions must fight the wolves, killing them or driving them off. They are hungry and fierce, for they recently escaped the Elves of Mirkwood, and are ambushing any traveller they encounter in the Narrows.

There are two Wolves for each member of the company; the beasts flee when half or fewer remain. (See the entry for Wild Wolves, page 246 of *The One Ring Roleplaying Game*).

Final Words?

The man on the tree goes by the name of Clifford Sedger. He joined Domi and his following when the Dwarf passed through Bree. Cliff left his home seeking his fortune, and almost died in the attempt: pus drips from a festering wound on his leg.

When Cliff descends from the tree he has the time to ask the company for a final pipe, then he collapses to the ground: being chased by the Wargs was too much for the injured Bree-man. A companion can wrestle Cliff from the grasp of death with a successful **Healing** roll. Cliff can speak with the companions even if the roll fails, but in such a case he will pass away before the night is over.

Cliff can share the following information with the company:

- Cliff was accompanying a 'Dwarf-lord' from the Blue Mountains, travelling to Dale with a retinue of six other Dwarves (if the name Domi is mentioned, Cliff confirms it's the same Dwarf). He was in charge of taking care of the ponies the Dwarves bought in Bree.

- Two weeks ago, armed men ambushed the caravan just before sundown. When the attack started, Cliff was badly injured by an arrow to the leg and left for dead. When he recovered his senses, he counted three bodies of Dwarves on the ground. Domi was not among them. He has since been trying to make it south to civilisation.

- The attackers were men, well-armed and ruthless, and among them was a small, squint-eyed creature, a Goblin perhaps. It was that creature who shot Cliff.

The Dawn Breaks

When the morning comes, the companions can start looking for Domi and his captors. If Clifford didn't make it, the heroes should take the time to give him a decent burial (failing to do so gains each hero a Shadow point). If the Breeman is alive, he insists on going with them: he says that while he will certainly slow them down because of his wound, he knows his ponies well and he is sure he can follow their tracks better than anyone.

The tracks left by the attackers are easily found in daylight. They head north, towards the foothills of the Grey Mountains, only to head east after a few miles.

To stay on the path, the companions must succeed in a **Hunting** test each day. The difficulty of the test is *hard* (TN 16), or *moderate* (TN 14) if Clifford is travelling with the company.

- Part Three -
Hunters in the Waste

Following the tracks of Domi and his captors, the heroes head back east. It takes them 3 days and 1 Fatigue test to cross the Northern Dalelands and get to the border of the Waste (4 days if they are travelling with Clifford).

Then, the companions travel without coming in sight of Domi for 40 miles, still marching across the Waste for four more days: since it is Autumn, the heroes must pass another Fatigue test (TN 18) and a Corruption test; failing

the Corruption test gains a hero a Shadow point, as the dreary nature of the land saps away at their spirit.

While in the Waste, the companions must still succeed in a **Hunting** test each day to keep following their quarry, but the difficulty of the test is now *severe* (TN 18), or *hard* (TN 16) if Clifford is travelling with the company.

Hazards Suggestions

Here in the Waste the Desolation of Smaug endures still. It is a blasted land of ash, cracked earth, charcoal fingered woods and incinerated buildings blackened by dragon-fire. There is little animal or plant life, just a few mean shrubs, thorns, and endless beetles and maggots. Most of the water here is found in sulphurous pools.

Supply Shortage (All Companions, Misery)
The companions discover that the stress of the hunt has taken its toll beyond all expectations, leading them to indulge excessively in eating, drinking, or in some habit. Water or food is scarce now, or the cache of pipe-weed is nearly depleted. All companions must pass a Wisdom test or become temporarily Miserable for the length of the journey.

Fleas (All Companions, Strain)
A nasty breed of fleas has infested the companions' sleeping cots! The companions sleep badly for nights on end, and suffer an unbearable itch by day. All companions must pass an additional **Travel** test or lose Endurance equal to the result of a Success die.

Catching up with Domi

After four days of marching across the Waste, fierce winds start blowing from the north at night, whipping up a storm of ashes. Fine grit swirls and gets everywhere: equipment, provisions, clothing, eyes and mouths, leaving an acrid taste. When the wind finally drops the following dawn, the companions realise they cannot find the tracks they were following.

- To find again the trail they were following the company must scout the area. All heroes acting as huntsmen and scouts are allowed to make two skill rolls every day, using **Hunting, Explore** or **Search**. When the companions have accumulated at least six successful rolls, they will have finally caught up with their quarry.

Regardless of the number of days it takes them to succeed, the companions are fortunate in that the villains expect no one – the company can easily approach unawares. They find Domi and three other Dwarves on top of a rocky and broken hillock. They are busily digging in the ground with pickaxes and mattocks, watched over by a strange menagerie of creatures...

Goblins and Hobgoblins of the Worst Description

When the companions arrive, they witness that two interested parties have come together in a loose alliance to seize the contents of the mausoleum:

One is a group of six tall, bony, Orc-like brutes, with long arms and flat faces: a hero possessing the trait Shadow-lore or Orc-lore identifies them as Hobgoblins, particularly ferocious creatures, haters of other breeds of Orcs and hated by them in return, and particularly powerful in the dark. They have approached the captors of Domi offering to guide them across the Waste, in return for a reward.

The other is the group of men-at-arms that captured Domi, a band of mercenaries on the payroll of Lord Hakon, cutthroats and brigands of the worst kind, led by Firbul, a cunning Snaga tracker. The group consists of two men for every companion, plus their Goblin leader.

The men-at-arms have set up an encampment within a circle of large stones, a few yards away from the digging site, while the Hobgoblins squat beside a fallen and dried tree-trunk, on the other side of the hillock.

Longo's Lieutenants

If the players have been playing the previous adventures presented in this supplement, then Vig, Kasper and Swain, the trusted right-hand men of the bandit Longo, may make an appearance. Always ready to make powerful friends, if they are still alive and free they have taken Lord Hakon as their new employer and have been sent to assist Firbul in leading the company of cutthroats looking for the treasure of Girion.

In the Nick of Time?

If the heroes succeeded at the prolonged search in the Waste in two days or less, they arrive before the entrance to the mausoleum of Girion has been fully unearthed. The Dwarves are chained and being forced to dig in the rocky ground, watched by the men that captured them.

If it took them more than two days to find Domi, the companions arrive as they are in the final stages of digging out the mausoleum, too late to save the Dwarves other than Domi: having outlasted their usefulness, they have been given to the Hobgoblins for them to feast upon... The sight of their broken bodies causes all companions to make a Corruption test due to anguish, with a failure gaining a hero a point of Shadow. Fortunately for Domi, his captors decided the old Dwarf was too useful to kill yet.

Outnumbered but not Outwitted

The company is significantly outnumbered and may decide that a direct assault is not a prudent idea. The heroes need a clever plan, something that will let them reverse the odds. The next paragraphs summarise a few possible courses of action.

Free the Prisoners

If the companions manage to get the captives free (if they are still alive), the three Dwarves accompanying Domi will leap upon the Hobgoblins with fury, wielding their digging tools to deadly effect and keeping the monsters out of the combat while the company fights the rest of the foes. Their struggle will last for five rounds, at the end of which the three Dwarves will end up dead, having brought with them four of the six Hobgoblins.

Keep them Bickering and Quarrelling

Should the heroes observe the group of adversaries for a few hours before taking action, they will see that three of the Hobgoblins and the Snaga tracker often quarrel over who will get "the treasure" once the Dwarves have dug it up. The arguments always end with shouts and threats, but no weapons are drawn. Is this something that clever heroes could find a way to exploit? Hobgoblins are not the brightest creatures among the servants of the Shadow...

Divide and Conquer

The companions can attempt to exploit the distance between the encampment of the men-at-arms and the Hobgoblins, possibly to attack them separately by setting up a diversion (set the encampment on fire? Use some Elven magic?).

Alternatively, small groups of men-at-arms leave the encampment regularly on patrol, and to try and find something to eat or drink in the unwelcoming Waste. The companions could ambush a couple of patrols while away from the digging site (each patrol is composed of 3 men-at-arms; if they are not all engaged simultaneously one blows a horn to sound the alarm).

The Battle is On

When the companions finally engage the enemy, the Loremaster should make note of the time of day or night, and also take into account the following elements:

- The Hobgoblins attack ferociously using their *Horrible Strength*, attempting to deal swiftly with each opponent. If at night, they will fight to the death. If the battle is fought under the pale sunlight of the Waste, they stop spending Hate when reduced to 2 points, and will flee when at least two of them are killed.
- If the Hobgoblins are out of the fight for any reason, or if the companions start gaining the upper hand in the fight, Firbul will look for a way out and quickly flee the battlefield. He won't spare the lives of his men to accomplish this, and he has another ace up his sleeve... (see page 58).
- If Firbul is killed or he deserts his men, then any surviving cutthroats will rout and flee as soon as their casualties exceed the number of surviving fighters.
- Domi is too old for battle, and tries to stay out of it. He won't be of any assistance in this fight.

Firbul, Snaga Tracker

This small but guileful Orc serves the Sorcerer of Forod. The Nazgûl has found several ways to employ the Goblin's cruel cunning. (Firbul's superior capabilities have been represented using special abilities presented in *Rivendell*, on page 67).

Attribute Level	
4	
Endurance	Hate
16	6
Parry	Armour
7	2d
Skills	
Personality, 3	Survival, 3
Movement, 2	Custom, 2
Perception, 3	Vocation, 3
Weapon Skills	
Bow of Horn	3
Jagged Knife	3
Special Abilities	
Cruel Stroke*	Battle-hardened**
Hate Sunlight	Snake-like Speed

** If Firbul's attack has just hit producing a Piercing blow, reduce his Hate point score by 1 point to raise the weapon's Injury rating by 4.*
*** Firbul's basic Parry rating is equal to 7 (3 + his Attribute level).*

Weapons:

Weapon type	Damage	Edge	Injury	Called Shot
Deadly Bow of Horn	4	8	12	Poison*
Jagged Knife	3		14	-

**Orc-poison:* See page 237 of *The One Ring Roleplaying Game*.

Cutthroats of the Dalelands

Firbul's men are some of the many outlaws and misfits that Lord Hakon of Dale has been recruiting lately. Violent and ruthless, they resent any authority, but they nevertheless obey all orders the diminutive Goblin gives them, as they sense that behind Firbul lies a longer, deeper shadow.

Attribute Level	
4	
Endurance	Hate
14	3
Parry	Armour
4	1d
Skills	
Personality, 1	Survival, 2
Movement, 2	Custom, 1
Perception, 2	Vocation, 1
Weapon Skills	
Sword	2
Bow	2
Special Abilities	
No Quarter	-

Weapons:

Weapon type	Damage	Edge	Injury	Called Shot
Bow	5	10	14	Pierce
Sword	5	10	16	Disarm

The Hobgoblins

Cruel and cannibalistic, Hobgoblins detest the company of other Orcs, and barely tolerate Trolls.

Attribute Level	
4	
Endurance	Hate
36	5
Parry	Armour
4+3(great shield)	2d
Skills	
Personality, 1	Survival, 2
Movement, 2	Custom, 1
Perception, 3	Vocation, 1
Weapon Skills	
Orc-axe	3
Bite	3
Special Abilities	
Denizen of the Dark	Hate Sunlight
Horrible Strength	No Quarter

Weapons:

Weapon type	Damage	Edge	Injury	Called Shot
Bite	4		14	-
Orc-axe	5		16	Break Shield

After the Battle

At the end of the fight, the digging site will most likely be covered by the bodies of friends and foes alike. Above, the grey sky soon becomes speckled with black dots, carrion birds slowly circling the battlefield. If the companions investigate the corpses of the men-at-arms, they find several clues indicating that these men must have visited Dale recently. In their pouches they carry food clearly bought in town, and wine flagons that any companion who knows the area can tell were bought from local wine sellers.

- Part Four - The Mausoleum

Domi the scholar and any surviving Dwarves will be extremely grateful to the company for their intervention and thank the adventurers profusely. As soon as they learn that the heroes were not sent by fate but that they are on actual rescue mission, the Dwarves manifest their firm decision not to leave and continue digging up the mausoleum. It would be a terrible shame not to complete the work they have started, after all the hardships they have been through.

If the companions arrived at the digging site before the entrance to the mausoleum was fully unearthed, Domi and his surviving companions will immediately set to work – it will take them another day to finish digging. If the companions arrived late, then the stair descending to the mausoleum is already visible at the bottom of a large hole dug through the layers of ash.

Domi the Scholar

Attribute Level 5
Specialties: Old Lore, Erebor-Lore
Distinctive Features: Curious, Honourable
Relevant Skills: Explore ♦♦♦, Lore ♦♦♦♦♦, Search ♦♦♦♦

Domi was born close to three centuries ago. He remembers Erebor's former glory, but he can see the fields of Azanulbizar and the Dwarf bodies that covered them just as clearly. This notwithstanding, Domi's curiosity for the lore and legends of the past is undimmed, compelling him to travel over mountain and vale despite his advanced age, to uncover the lives of the lost, their stories and treasures. There is a quiet, wizened peace to Domi. He knows that he has lived beyond the years of many a Dwarf, and his days are now limited. This acceptance has brought him a brightness and joy for each day that he sees. His face is so filled with wrinkles as to appear like a cobblestone street, but his deep-set eyes still twinkle above his cloudy white beard.

The Tomb

The mausoleum was erected here, far away from the heart of the kingdom of Dale, to hide it from the grieving eyes of a father who lost his dearest son. Built with the aid of Dwarven stonemasons, it is a small architectural wonder, reflecting the greatness of a kingdom that only Dragonfire could consign to oblivion.

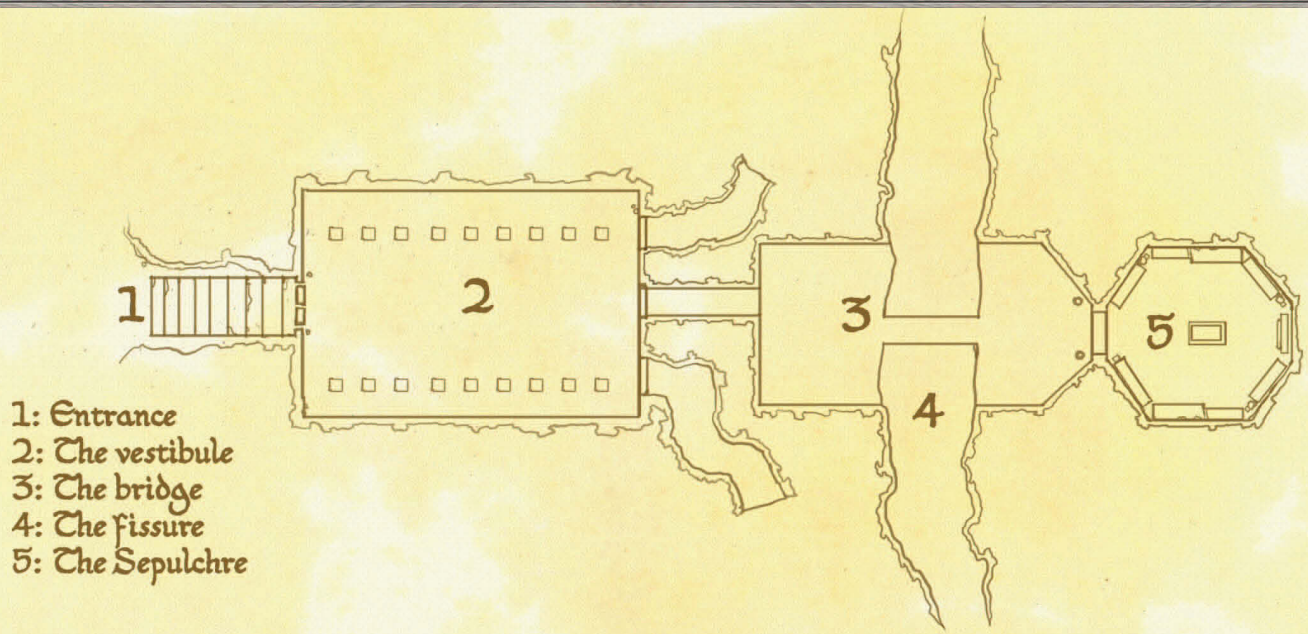
The mausoleum is a subterranean building, an inverted construction with floors going below the ground, instead of rising tall above the surface.

The Entrance

Domi's companions have dug out a flight of stone stairs, descending into the ground. The steps are covered in heavy black ash which takes some time to sweep away. At the bottom of the stairs, a stone door awaits, untroubled by time. If the heroes are reluctant, Domi precedes down the stairs, jumping two steps at a time, suddenly as sprightly as a young deer. The other surviving Dwarves remain on the surface, exhausted by the digging.

The door is set into a dark grey wall. It is kept shut using four rope knots held by wax seals bearing the sigil of Girion. Dried by the arid air of the Waste, the seals crumble upon inspection. The door is not locked, and swings open when pushed, as if the centuries it laid under the earth were but days.

Beyond the door lies the vestibule, a dark, rectangular chamber, with a low and vaulted roof. When the companions make some light, they find that the walls are decorated with wonderful murals, depicting a Dalish Lord holding court over many noble-looking Men and receiving homage from Dwarves and Silvan Elves. It is certainly the work of a master craftsman, the shining example of an art now long lost.



1: Entrance
2: The vestibule
3: The bridge
4: The fissure
5: The Sepulchre

On the corners of the wall opposite the gate stand two stone statues, portraying armoured Men with folded arms and bowed heads. No openings are visible on any of the walls.

The Hidden Doors

On the far wall of the vestibule, three doors have been hidden by the cunning of their Dwarven builders. It takes a **Search** test (TN 20) to locate the first concealed door. If a Dwarf is present (including Domi) the difficulty is lowered by two levels (TN 16). As soon as one of the doors is found, the other doors are easier to spot (TN 14). Each door opens by applying pressure at a particular point, and swings inward reluctantly with the grinding of stone on stone.

Beyond each opening is a roughly-hewn tunnel that descends deeper into the ground; the tunnels to the left and right end abruptly, as the construction of the chambers to which they were intended to lead were never completed. Only the central door leads to a burial chamber, that of the eldest son of Girion.

The Royal Mausoleum

The mausoleum was planned such that it might eventually house the sepulchres of Girion, Lord of Dale, and his two sons. Only one of the burial chambers was excavated fully, as the Lord of Dale was killed by the Dragon Smaug, and his younger son outlived the realm he was meant to rule one day. From his line descends the current Lord of Dale, King Bard.

Players can guess the above information using their knowledge of the past history of the kingdom of Dale. Otherwise, a roll of Lore will do.

The Bridge

The tunnel starting from the central hidden door descends for a few yards, to reach a chamber with a floor covered by polished black marble tiles. Here, a cold breeze blows, emerging from a fissure dividing the chamber in two. A narrow stone bridge spans the fissure, whose dark depth is impossible to fathom. An **Awareness** or **Craft** skill test reveals that the bridge is safe (on a failure, the characters waste time trying to work out how secure the bridge is, or to find a way to safely traverse it).

An iron door opens on the far wall of the chamber, on the other side of the bridge. At either side of the door hang two great braziers, wrought of black iron and suspended from the ceiling using long chains. The iron door is closed and locked, and no keyholes or opening mechanisms are visible.

By some ancient Dwarven craft, the iron door opens only if both braziers are lit. Lighting a brazier requires a **Craft** roll with TN 16, as the cold breeze keeps extinguishing the flames as if it were guided by a malicious will (a hero possessing the Fire-making or Smoking trait may invoke it to succeed automatically).

The Sepulchre

The iron door opens on the resting place of the eldest son of Girion. It is an octagonal chamber, lit dimly by a narrow shaft of light falling down from an opening at the centre of the domed ceiling.

When the companions enter, their feet disturb a deep layer of dust covering the floor. The air is stuffy, and feels warmer than the breeze blowing from the fissure outside.

The shaft of light falls directly on a stone sarcophagus in the middle of the room. It is a massive, oblong block of limestone, upon which is laid a great slab of white marble. The slab is perfectly polished, its surface graven with runes that read:

He who lies here was a Prince among Men, first born of Girion Lord of Dale

The sides of the sarcophagus are intricately carven, showing Dalish riders hunting deer in a forest. The fair faces of Elves hiding in the trees spy the passing hunters. The presence of a couple of hideous, many-legged creatures identifies the forest as Mirkwood.

The walls of the octagonal chamber are lined with shelves, laden with many wooden chests, ivory caskets and cabinets, glass urns and vases, golden bowls, dishes and cups. On the floor, along the walls, lie mounds of coins,

trunks of time-spoiled clothes, boxes of jewels, fine pottery, old banners and ruined tapestries, racks of blades well-crafted and rusty, set along suits of armour.

Right behind the sarcophagus is the object of the adventure, hanging on a stand is the coat of armour of Girion's eldest son. When torchlight falls on it, the Dwarf-linked rings shimmer like flames upon water, for a moment filling the sepulchre with the blaze of a ghostly Dragon-fire.

Adventurers, or Tomb-robbers?

Unfortunately for the adventurers, the riches that lie in front of them are not a treasure trove accumulated by a Dragon or by a family of thieving Trolls, but the grave goods of a prince whose lineage leads directly to the current ruler of Dale. This means that the heroes cannot rightfully claim anything they find in the mausoleum, and taking something is a Misdeed, resulting in an automatic Shadow gain of 2 points each. If this is not obvious to the companions and they start looting the tomb, Domi will clarify the issue for them: in a burst of outrage he will call them thieves, reminding them that their actions will call upon their heads both the enmity of the house of Bard and the everlasting hate of the Dwarves of Erebor!

Magical Treasure Rolls

If one or more companions are willing to pay the cost and run the risks detailed above (including the wrath of Domi), then the gold, gems and precious items contained in the tomb can be considered a hoard with a Treasure rating of 100**. If the Loremaster is using the rules presented in *Rivendell*, this is a good opportunity for the Loremaster to introduce a Wondrous Object or Famous Weapon or Armour from the campaign's Magical Treasure Index. Something that can defend against, or harm, a Dragon could be a good choice, considering the adversary that the companions will face in the next adventure...

A Voice Filled with Evil and Horror

While the companions pause dumbstruck in front of the magnificence of the sepulchre, the Sorcerer of Forod arrives on the hillock outside. Unclad and invisible, the presence of the Nazgûl is immediately perceived by everyone inside the mausoleum as a sudden chill, and the certainty that something terrible has manifested on the surface. Everyone must pass a Fear test with TN 14, or TN 18 at night, or be *daunted* (see *The One Ring Roleplaying Game*, page 146)

If any companions remained outside the mausoleum, they can see nothing, but the feeling of dread is almost a physical sensation, like drowning in cold water: exposed companions must additionally resist the *Black Breath*, passing immediately a Corruption test against TN 14 (TN 18 if at night). Failure means the companion falls unconscious and gains a point of Shadow.

After appraising the situation, Morlach leaves, but not before rending the air with his *Deadly Voice*: a deafening, high-pitched cry causes all daunted companions to additionally become Weary.

The Shadow of Fear

If the Ringwraith finds only Loremaster characters outside the mausoleum (for example, Clifford the Breeman, or any of the surviving Dwarves accompanying Domi), the Sorcerer scatters them to the four winds in fear, and then singles one of them out to put the Shadow of Fear upon him: the Ringwraith turns the unfortunate into a spell-bound agent, commanding him to steal the Coat of Silver Mail when the first occasion presents itself.

Since it is not possible to establish beforehand what the companions will resolve to do with the precious armour (carry it with them, hide it, etc.), every Loremaster will have to decide for themselves how and when to trigger this eventuality, and which consequences it will generate.

Will the Dwarves blame the companions for the theft? Will Lord Bakon succeed in pitting Dale against Erebor? Will the disappearance of the main item of contention between the two factions unite the Dwarves and the Bardings against the common enemy?

- Part Five -
Wings of Iron

The plan of Morlach was simple: he made his appearance to weaken the companions, so that they will be more vulnerable to the attacks he has planned with the help of Firbul.

Out of the Forgotten North

A lost breed of monstrous birds of prey still lives in the Grey Mountains, survivors of the rookeries of the fortress of Angband in the North. The Messenger of Mordor has summoned a flock of the creatures from their hideous eyrie, putting them under the command of Firbul the Goblin.

When the companions emerge from the mausoleum, they will soon see dark shapes in the sky. The creatures will wait until the heroes leave the safety of the mausoleum, and then begin to circle lower and lower, until it will be too late to escape. Without a sound, the flock of great birds falls upon the company, trying to shred them all to ribbons.

The Attack

There are as many Silent Vultures as there are companions, plus two. Firbul is riding the largest vulture, commanding the great birds to attack the companions. If the Goblin is killed, the rest of the vultures will soon relent (after a number of rounds of combat equal to the number of companions still in the fight).

Silent Vultures

Bred by the Great Enemy uncounted centuries ago, possibly in mockery of the Great Eagles, these creatures are gigantic birds of prey, with wide wings, sharp talons and serrated beaks. The black feathers of their wings are hard as iron, and send sparks flying when their wings scrape stone, so that the Silent Vultures are able to set fire to a forest, if it helps them to ferret out their quarry. They emit no sound nor noise: legends tell how the Great Enemy struck them dumb when he grew tired of their screeching voices.

Attribute Level	
6	
Endurance	Hate
35	5
Parry	Armour
7	2d
Skills	
Personality, 2	Survival, 2
Movement, 3	Custom, 1
Perception, 3	Vocation, 1
Weapon Skills	
Talons	3
Beak	3
Special Abilities	
Disgorge*	Fell Speed
Formidable**	Savage Assault
Seize Victim	Weak Spot

** A vulture that successfully seized a character may attack its victim using its Beak, or may regurgitate the contents of its poisonous belly over its victim: the victim must pass a Protection test against TN 14 or be Poisoned and suffer 2 Success dice of endurance damage.*

*** When a Silent Vulture attacks using its Talons, the creature rolls the Feat die twice and keeps the best result.*

Weapons:

Weapon type	Damage	Edge	Injury	Called Shot
Talons	8		16	Piercing Blow
Beak	6	10	16	Piercing Blow

The Journey Back

Hopefully, the companions will eventually emerge victorious from the fight, probably wounded and weary, still reeling from the dizzying sight of the magnificent treasure buried in the sepulchre. They have accomplished much of what they set out to do, but in front of them now lies a long journey south, one they cannot hope to make whilst laden with treasure and also, potentially, in the company of Clifford the Man of Bree, Domi the scholar, and some other exhausted Dwarves in their train.

Before they set out, the companions need to make some decisions about the disinterred mausoleum and the treasure it contains. Concealing the entrance to the tomb requires half a day, but one possibility they might consider is to leave someone behind, to keep watch on the ruins.

The Straightest Path

As far as the return trip is concerned, they have little option but to follow the shortest route back to more civilised lands. Their path will bring them southeast for about 30 miles, to the edge of the Waste, and then 50 miles south, to pass the Lonely Mountain to the east and finally reach Dale.

- The first leg of the journey has the company trudge along for 3 days, requiring 1 Fatigue test (TN 18) and a Corruption test: again, failing the Corruption test gains a hero a Shadow point.

- The second leg across the Northern Dalelands would take 3 more days to complete, and 1 Fatigue test (TN 14), but one day after they leave the Waste behind, the companions have an unexpected encounter...

- Part Six -
Clouds Gather, Again

The company is slowly approaching the Lonely Mountain, travelling across the Northern Dalelands, when they spy a wide encampment filled with tents and banners, raised on a green field not far from a small village. The field is reached by crossing a wooden bridge, spanning a narrow watercourse. On the other side of the bridge, the companions are met by a group composed of both King Bard's Royal Archers in their head-to-toe black livery, and mattock-wielding Dwarves that clearly belong to Dáin's famed Iron Guard.

The guards seem to be expecting the companions, and without further ado escort them to the centre of the encampment.

A Council

It seems that, days after the companions left Dale, word of their secret mission surfaced and spread like wildfire among Dwarves and Men alike (the work of Lord Hakon, who secretly seeks to ignite a quarrel between Erebor and Dale).

Even in the absence of an official confirmation to the rumour, a number of Barding lords and Dwarves took into their own hands the matter to find out what the heroes may, or may not, have found on their adventure.

When Dwarves and Men met on the roads leading north, each suspected that the other knew more than they did, and things might have escalated very quickly. Luckily for everyone involved, Thegn Jofur of the Bardings and Dwalin of the Dwarves met and decided that all they could do for the moment was to sit and wait for the companions to return.

When the companions do arrive, both Thegn Jofur and Dwalin struggle to hide their surprise and relief. None of them really expected the companions to return, let alone to see them appear with news of a fabulous treasure!

When they recover, they jointly announce to the heroes that they are called to participate in a council to "discuss matters" in the name of their respective Kings.

Set Tolerance

The companions will not be the only ones to speak at the council, but their intervention will be necessary to tip the balance in favour of one case or the other. Hopefully, they won't disgrace themselves in front of the assembled lords before they can make a difference (if the heroes exceed Tolerance before they can state their case in *The Debate* then Lord Hakon has his way).

The assembled Barding nobles respond better to Wisdom when gathered in council, but Dwalin is not interested in hearing the companions address points of law, and is only impressed by Valour. As a consequence, the basic Tolerance rating of the encounter is based on the average between the highest Valour and Wisdom in the group (rounding fractions down). The score is then modified by +2 if the companions are known and appreciated by both cultures. Standing cannot be applied, as the favour of one culture is seen as a bias by the other.

Introduction

The council is held at the centre of the encampment, in an open area dividing the two factions. Heralds announce that Thegn Jofur and Lord Hakon will speak for the Bardings, and that Dwalin and Domi will do the same for the Dwarves. The names of many other lords present are called, possibly some the company knows, but they are here to witness, not to speak.

The companions are asked to introduce themselves in front of the assembly, even if they are well-known to everyone present, having likely served both kingdoms in their time. **Awe** is the skill most suited for such an occasion.

When they are done, Thegn Jofur rises from his seat. As the primary sponsor of their mission, he invites the heroes to recount their tale in detail. A roll of **Inspire** or **Song** will do (**Riddle** if the companions intend to withhold some information).

Interaction

When the companions are done describing what happened since they left Dale, the council moves to the most important matter, the true object of this gathering: to solve the problem of who is the rightful owner of the treasures of the mausoleum, and in particular of the Coat of Silver Mail.

Dwalin alone speaks for the Dwarves. Old Domi sits to one side noting everything that is being said and only correcting him on points of historical accuracy.

The presence of Domi makes things difficult for Dwalin, as the scholar cannot ignore the uncertain historical ground upon which the Dwarven case is built (see below). Distracted by Domi, Dwalin is quick to take offence, and Lord Hakon is cunningly able to exploit Dwalin's temper.

Lord Hakon speaks for the Bardings, as for the moment he enjoys a leading position in court, compared to Thegn Jofur. Jofur on his part takes every occasion to intervene, reminding everyone about his role as the first sponsor for the companions in their quest.

Ancestral Rights

The key points of the debate are as follows.

- Dwalin presents the Dwarven Case first. His speech is short and direct, with no concessions to persuasion or rhetorical skills (Dwalin firmly believes what he says to be right, and thinks that no oratory is required to make his point). In a few words, he concedes that it is true that all records chronicle how Girion paid for the Coat of Silver Mail with a necklace of emeralds, but he reminds everyone that the necklace was returned to Bard by Dáin after the Battle of Five Armies. Moreover, the very existence of the mausoleum has been discovered only thanks to the studies of a Dwarven scholar.

  As a consequence, it is only fair to recognise that the Dwarves have the right to claim at least a share of the treasure, and that the Bardings hold no right whatsoever over the Dwarf-mail.

- Lord Hakon presents the case for Dale, turning Dwalin's own words against him. His oratory is as eloquent and persuasive as Dwalin's was dry: in so many words Hakon states that Girion paid for the coat of mail in his time, a fact that cannot be denied. But what the Dwarves decided to do with the necklace of Girion after that is of no consequence at all! Anyone not of the house of Girion claiming any right over the mausoleum or taking anything from it would be a thief and a liar.

  The coat of Dwarf-linked rings and everything else the companions found in the tomb belong to the kingdom of Dale and nothing is due to the Dwarves.

It is indeed clear that both parties make claims that are hardly reconcilable. As soon as the orators are done with their speech, other voices are raised in support of this or the other argument. Reasonable suggestions that the coat of mail be returned to the Dwarves as a token of friendship are quickly drowned out by angrier voices. Old grudges flare, and accusations are exchanged. Survivors of the burning of Lake-town recall how it was Erebor's obvious wealth that brought the Dragon to Dale; Dwarves from the Iron Hills remind them how many of their kin laboured hard to rebuild their city of stone. Veterans of the Battle of Five Armies from both sides shake their heads,

remembering how this same spirit almost brought ruin upon them all that day...

The debate promises to become increasingly fierce. Harsh words are on the verge of being exchanged that cannot be unsaid, and dire consequences loom. If the player-heroes do not intervene the argument will escalate to a degree that may harm alliances.

The Debate

The heroes' participation will help the council to reach a conclusion. There are three main options (unless the players propose a different compromise) and the companions must basically choose to side with either the Bardings or the Dwarves, or opt for a middle ground. The companions must choose one proposal to back. The company must win five successes without exceeding Tolerance to convince the council. **Awe**, **Courtesy**, **Inspire** or even **Song** are all equally valid choices. The difficulty of the rolls is indicated under each proposal entry.

1. *Recognise the right of the Dwarves over the coat of mail and a share of the treasure.* Even if it is debatable whether the restitution of the necklace to the Bardings gives the Dwarves any right over the coat of mail, it cannot be denied that the treasure of the mausoleum has been found thanks to the efforts of the Dwarves, and of old Domi in particular.

   This is the hardest option to drum up support for, but is the one that is most likely to avoid consequences in the future. All rolls are made against TN 18.

2. *Recognise the right of the Bardings to claim the whole treasure.* The tomb is clearly marked as that of the son of Girion, Lord of Dale. King Bard is Girion's heir, and thus he has a rightful claim over the coat of mail and the treasure.

   This is the easiest option, as it's the one with the soundest proofs supporting it, but it will gain the companions the enmity of the Dwarves of Erebor loyal to Dwalin. All rolls are made against TN 14.

3. *Convince the Bardings to leave the Coat of Mail to the Dwarves*, regardless of any point of law, as a token of goodwill from a loyal ally.

   The third option is hard, as it finds strong opposition from Lord Hakon and his loyal Barding supporters. All rolls are made against TN 16.

The Decision

When the players are done trying to affect the council's decision, Lord Hakon and Dwalin call for a vote. If the companions achieved the required successes, the assembled dignitaries express their decision accordingly, choosing the option sponsored by the heroes. Otherwise, Lord Hakon has it his way, and the Bardings claim the whole treasure (option 2). The following entries detail the consequences of the three possible decisions.

- *Option 1.* The council gives in to the uncompromising position of the Dwarves, possibly committing an injustice, but saving the day and keeping the peace. A minority among the Barding nobles criticise the companions for their stance, but their hostility for the moment only takes the form of angry mutters. (Lord Hakon is disappointed, but will attempt to add fuel to this fire in the future).

- *Option 2.* The council awards the speech of Lord Hakon, denying the Dwarves any right over the coat of mail or the treasure. Many voices rise in outrage from the Dwarven camp, and Dwalin leaves to return to Erebor, with a dozen followers in train.

  To Lord Hakon's great delight, from now on Dwalin is considered to hold a grudge against the Bardings and the companions, regardless of whether they sponsored this option or if they opposed it but failed to prevent this injustice. If the heroes meet the Dwarf in the future, they will find him ill-disposed towards them, to the point that he will do anything in his power to foil their endeavours.

- *Option 3.* The Dwarves are given the coat of mail as a token of good friendship. Everyone but Lord Hakon is happy.

- *Another Option.* If the company found their own way to a peaceful resolution, the Loremaster must determine the consequences, using the information above as a guide.

- Epilogue -

Later in the day, as all the dignitaries that participated in the council slowly start making their way back to their respective manors and palaces, the companions are discreetly approached by a hooded young man and invited to follow him to a pavilion erected close to the bridge. Companions who have visited King Bard in the past may recognise the messenger as a minstrel from the royal court of Dale.

Inside the pavilion, the companions are probably surprised to see Gandalf the Grey, seated on a stool smoking his pipe, handing a tobacco-jar to Balin, son of Fundin. The Wizard welcomes the companions with a smile, as he invites them to enter the pavilion quickly, and to close the tent behind them tightly. Balin bows deeply, before sitting next to Gandalf and starting to light his pipe.

"So, it was quite a dreadful business," says the Wizard, "and it nearly was disastrous! Tell us a bit about it..."

Gandalf and Balin wish to draw some conclusions about the current relations between the Bardings and the Dwarves of Erebor, and want to do this with the help of the companions. Based on how the council went, the two will either congratulate the heroes, exchange furtive, worried looks, or in the worst case even shake their heads in bitter disapproval.

Consequences

If the heroes performed poorly in the council, the relations between Dale and Erebor are chilled for the immediate future. Both communities suffer as mutual suspicion festers: trade slows, and Dale can no longer automatically rely on immediate military assistance from Erebor or the Iron Hills as grudges old and new will make Dwarven leaders slow to act. Meanwhile, the Dwarves of Erebor start laying in provisions and consider importing foodstuffs from further abroad. Any Bardings or Dwarves gain one point of Shadow.

Neither Bard nor Dáin will allow war over a single coat of mail, but their friendship is, for a time, strained. In the short term, Bard likely gains the coat, and Lord Hakon rises even higher in his counsels.

If the heroes are very successful at the end, Lord Hakon's hopes for a political future are dashed and he leaves Dale in disgust. He returns to his estates to plot, gather brigand forces, and make further alliance with the Orcs.

The company will have made an enemy of Hakon. He will maintain a cold anger towards them, and seek revenge at a later time of his own choosing (Lord Hakon will restore enough of his political influence to trouble the heroes in **Shadows in the North**).

Regardless of the outcome, the company has a decent chance of being well regarded by both Dale and Erebor. Even if they ultimately sided with the Bowman, King Dáin respects loyalty and he will not quickly forget the lives of any Dwarves saved. Likewise, King Bard understands all too well that duty can be a heavy burden and will not hold a grudge against a Dwarf companion that spoke for Erebor.

- Sleeping - Dragons Lie

- **When:** After the events of **The Watch on the Heath**, in the *Tales from Wilderland* supplement. It is quite likely that a few years have passed; the assumed starting date is 2960, in late spring.
- **Where:** Erebor, and the watchtower on the edge of the Withered Heath.
- **What:** The company are sent to slay a Dragon that slumbers in the ruins of the watchtower.
- **Why:** Why now? Smoke is rising from the watchtower, and the sages agree that this is an ill omen – for Dragon-smoke one day brings Dragon-fire the next...
- **Who:** King Dáin Ironfoot places a bounty on the wyrm's head.

Adventuring Phase

The adventure is divided into seven parts.

Part One - Smoke On The Horizon

King Dáin fears that the Dragon of the watchtower is growing too strong, and will soon turn his greedy eyes south to Erebor, as Smaug did before. He therefore calls for heroes to strike before the wyrm turns.

Part Two - On Dragons

The company – and the Loremaster – are invited to consider Dragons, and the many problems associated with them.

Part Three - The Shadow of his Wings

On their journey north, the company risk betrayal by their rivals on this quest.

Part Four - Across the New Desolation

Leaving the lands of men, the company must brave the peril of the New Desolation around the watchtower.

Part Five - The Passage of the Gorge

Approaching the borders of the Withered Heath, the company must evade or defeat the Dragon's Orc-servants.

Part Six - By Stealth and Guile

The company arrive at the ancient watchtower, and make their way through its halls in search of the enemy.

Part Seven - Slaying the Dragon

Finally, the companions face the Dragon, and either defeat it or perish.

Epilogue

The Dragon is dead! Or is it not? If victorious, the heroes earn honour and renown.

The Nature of the Beast

Tales from Wilderland introduced a Dragon named Raenar, a terrible Cold-drake from the North that slew King Dáin II Ironfoot's great-grandfather (also named Dáin) at the gates of his kingdom in the Grey Mountains. Depending on how the final adventure in *Tales* played out, Raenar might be:

- Dead, at the hands of the company or in battle with the vile Gibbet King.
- Alive, having heeded the company's warning and avoided the Gibbet King's sorcerous trap. In such a situation, Raenar skulked around the mountains for a few years before taking up residence in the watchtower. The company's warning means Raenar will be better disposed towards them when at last they meet (see page 91).
- Alive, having defeated the Gibbet King. In this case, Raenar made the watchtower of Zirakinbar his home immediately.

If Raenar was slain in **The Watch on the Heath**, then his place in this adventure is taken by Wruenele, a young and brash Fire-drake, hatched in some forgotten nest in the north. Bravest and biggest of his brood, Wruenele flew south with the intention of using the abandoned watchtower atop Zirakinbar as his lair until he grew big enough to rival Smaug the Mighty.

Although he can breathe hot fumes, his fire is as yet weak and thin compared to the blazing conflagration of Smaug.

If you have not incorporated the events of **The Watch on the Heath**, use whichever Dragon you prefer.

The two Dragons are effectively interchangeable throughout most of this scenario, so when a passage refers to the Dragon, it applies to either candidate for arch-villain. When we need to refer to a specific Dragon, we shall use his proper name of either Raenar or Wruenele (for brevity, we must dispense with the honourifics and titles that are properly used when referring to a Dragon!).

Wasn't Raenar a Cold-drake?

The adventure is written presuming that the new draconic threat to the North is of the fire-breathing quality. Since the Great Worm Raenar was presented in *Tales from Wilderland* as a Cold-drake, a wingless wyrm unable to breath fire, then the Loremaster has basically two options if they want him to be the main antagonist:

- The first option is available if the adventures contained in this supplement are being played as a campaign. Raenar becomes a Fire-drake by means of powerful dark magic, performed by Morlach, the Sorcerer of Forod. The Ringwraith sets Raenar's poisonous fumes alight using ancient Morgothian spells, and gains a new ally for Sauron.

- The second option is to consider that Cold-drakes are Dragons whose fire has gone out, and that they can grow hot again (see *Hearing Stories about Dragons* on page 70), given enough time to grow. When Raenar first appeared he was diminished in size and strength by a long slumber, and now he is approaching his full stature again.

- Part One -
Smoke on the Horizon

In the years prior to this adventure, travellers in the desolate lands north of Erebor report seeing wisps of smoke on the distant horizon. Campfires, perhaps, they thought, but the next year the smoke plumes were darker, larger, fouler, like the grumblings of a volcano. At the same time, whispers came back to Erebor that a Dragon may have returned to the North, but those rumours were unsubstantiated by any proof.

Still, Dáin could not sleep easily, and he began to dream of smoke against the winter sky. The King Under the Mountain consulted his sages, learned men and women steeped in Dragon-lore. He spoke, too, to alchemists and hunters from Dale who dare to hunt young and bestial Cold-drakes out on the Waste, and even to those Elves whose memory reaches back even unto the Elder Days before the first Dragon arose to trouble Men and Dwarves alike. He even sought the counsel of passing Wizards. All agreed that sleeping Dragons are best left alone, but on the question of Dragon-fire there was no consensus.

Some said that the fire of Dragons was placed in them by the Enemy when the monsters were first bred in the pits beneath the mountains, and that they have only a certain reserve of hot breath, and that when this reserve is emptied they wither and die. Others claimed that Dragons draw strength from gold, and that the heat of their flames depends on their greedy triumphs. Still others said that the Enemy made different breeds of Dragons, hot and cold, winged and wingless, and that the different breeds cannot intermingle any more than Men and Elves (and that brought Dáin little comfort, for he has heard the Lay of Lúthien, and dreamt of a monster as hideous as the Halfelven are fair). No-one, not even the Wizards, could assure Dáin that a Dragon's fire could not grow in strength, or that a once-cold drake could not set its breath alight in time.

One night, Dáin dreamed of Dragon-fire consuming Erebor once more, and he knew that he could stay idle no longer.

The King's Summons

If the company enjoy a good reputation in the North, or if any of them have a Standing of 3 or more in Erebor or Dale, they are contacted by one of the King's messengers (a raven, if they are in the wilderness, or a herald if they are at home). Dáin's messenger describes the quest to the company, and bids them visit the Dwarven King at Erebor so that he may speak with them more fully.

Otherwise, they may hear of an opportunity to serve King Dáin through their contacts or patrons. Dáin is careful not to reveal his intention to destroy the Dragon – he fears (correctly) that the Dragon might have spies and agents who would give the monster advance warning if he publicly called for Dragon-slaying heroes.

Meeting the King

King Dáin meets with the company in his halls beneath the Lonely Mountain.

Set Tolerance

The initial Tolerance for this encounter is based on Valour, modified as follows:

- +**1** if there are any Dwarves in the party
- +**1** if any member of the company has a Standing of 3 or more in Erebor
- +**1** if they revealed Niping's treachery in the adventure **Of Hammers & Anvils**
- +**1** if the company have encountered a Dragon before (+**3** if they've *killed* a Dragon)
- -**5** if the company were informed of Dáin's plans in advance by messenger or herald, and subsequently betrayed his trust by failing to keep the mission a secret

Introduction

Courtesy is, of course, preferred when meeting a king (TN 12). Rolls using **Awe** are at TN 18 (dropping to TN 12 if the company have slain a Dragon before).

Interaction

Dáin describes the threat of the Dragon to the company. He believes that the Dragon's fires are waxing, and that soon its breath will blaze as fiercely as Smaug's, and since — as Dragon-greed and Dragon-fire are two sides of the same coin — a fiery Dragon is a hungry one, this is bound to bring devastation on Erebor. The Dragon must be killed or driven away before its fires grow too strong.

Dáin recommends that the company travel in secret and that they travel as swiftly as possible, in the hopes of reaching the peak of Zirakinbar before it is too late. Such a recommendation is reasonable.

He also says that he cannot risk giving any support or assistance to the company, for fear of some spy seeing the hand of the king and warning the Dragon. This paranoia may seem unreasonable to the company, so a successful **Persuade** test convinces the king to give the company supplies and mounts for the journey, as well as an escort to the edge of the Dale-lands. This allows the company to skip *Preparing for the Journey* (page 70).

As a reward for slaying the Dragon, Dáin offers each companion gold and precious gems amounting to 15 Treasure. He warns that the Dragon's hoard, if such a thing exists, is rightfully the property of the King under the Mountain and must be returned to him intact (depending on the events of **To Dungeons Deep** this may be a particularly... interesting... conversation). He will consider giving additional shares of such treasure at his own discretion.

Other likely questions may yield additional information:

- *"Are we the only hunters?"* — A roll of **Riddle** or **Insight** provides information about **The Other Hunters**

- *"Where does the dragon lair?"* — A roll of **Lore** or **Courtesy** gives access to Dwarven records about the Watchtower (see **Secrets of Mazarbul**, overleaf)

- *"What do you know of dragons?"* — A roll of **Lore** or **Courtesy** will convince Dáin to provide the company Dwarven records about Dragons (see page 70)

- *"Doesn't defeating a foe such as this deserve a richer reward?"* — A roll of **Awe** or **Persuade** increases the offered reward of Treasure (+5 Treasure per successful test)

Should the company exceed Tolerance, King Dáin grows frustrated with their questions and dismisses them. They may still brave the quest, and King Dáin will grudgingly give them a partial reward (5 Treasure each). Of course, at that rate, they may be better off taking the Dragon's entire hoard for themselves, earning a huge fortune... along with the eternal enmity of the King under the Mountain and his folk.

The Other Hunters

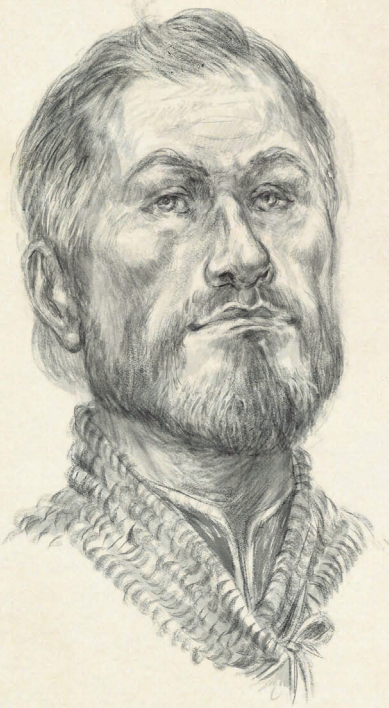
In addition to the company, there are three other groups in Dale who plan to slay the Dragon and claim the bounty. The company may learn the identity of these rivals from the King, or by spending a day on a **Riddle** test (TN 16) to gather information in Dale.

All of these rival hunters are already on the road, and have a head start of a day or two on the company.

- **The Brothers Khuldrim:** Despite the name, there are rather more than two or three of them, and they're not related by blood. These are a company of Dwarves led by a Dwarven warrior named Khuldri. Once, his brother Skuldri fought by his side, hence the name of their band, but Skuldri and most of the rest of the company perished on another quest, and their places have been filled by new and untried adventurers. Secretly, some of these new companions plan to use Khuldri's good name and reputation as a cloak to hide their own foul deeds. The Brothers are encountered again on page 73.

- **Greystroke and Skirfira:** Greystroke is a human hero from lands unknown; tall and grim, bitter and fell-handed, she carries an Elven long-spear called Nameless that she took from a troll's treasure-hoard (so called because Greystroke cannot read elf-letters, and never lets the spear go so that anyone else can study it). She rarely speaks. Her boon companion is a young Dwarf of the Iron Hills named Skirfira Silvertongue, a scholar and poet known for her merriment (and for being one of the very few Dwarf-women to defy convention and travel openly). These two show up twice in the adventure, on pages 72 and 87.

- **Lord Elstan:** The First Captain of Dale, commander of the Royal Barracks, Elstan is widely known in Wilderland. He wears shining Dwarven armour and bears a mighty shield, the Aegis of Dale, inlaid with truesilver and steel by the Dwarves in days of yore, blazoned with the sigil of the River Running. He is a hero of antique mode, like one of the fabulous toys of the Dale-market sprung to life. Lord Elstan is not as young or strong as he once was; he snoozes in his armour in the summer heat, and catches cold more quickly in winter. Still, he is the king's champion and determined not to fail. There is a further description of Elstan on page 50 of the Erebor supplement. He meets an unpleasant fate on page 74.



Secrets of Mazarbul

The record vaults of the Dwarves contain a book that describes the watchtower on the heath where the Dragon lairs. The original book was written in an obscure dialect of Khuzdul, but Skirfira Silvertongue has translated the text into the common tongue. In the introduction she laments the loss of a page in the original that contained a plan of the watchtower. If the company request it of Dáin, he permits them to read this new translation, which takes a day. If the companions once long ago read the original, they find that Silvertongue's work is much easier to understand. The company learn the following secrets:

1. Secret Entrance: There is a concealed entrance into the cellars of the watchtower. The key to the door is "a polished axe, thrice".

2. Traps: The Great Hall is guarded by a mighty stone. Should enemies breach the gate, the stone can be lowered to block the entrance tunnel, protecting the watchtower from the mightiest foe.

3. Treasure Vault: A secret vault was built when the tower was carved out of the mountain. It is in the last bedchamber on the left, and the entrance is hidden in the floor.

The book also mentions other aspects of the watchtower, like the fabled Chamber of Winds that channelled the howling winds of the mountains into music, or the Raven's Perch, but the Dragon has smashed the upper levels of the fortress and those wonders are lost forever.

- Part Two -
On Dragons

Before departing on their journey, the company may consult with sages or make other preparations for the quest. The longer they linger, the greater the risk that the Dragon's fires grow hotter – but only a fool would go into the Wild without so much as a handkerchief.

The Dragon's Eye

The *Rivendell* supplement presents rules for the Eye of Mordor, representing the Dark Lord's hostility to the Free Peoples, and how he can more easily spy the presence of large companies and powerful heroes.

In this adventure, the Dragon is a more pressing danger, so a variation of those rules is used.

The Dragon Watches

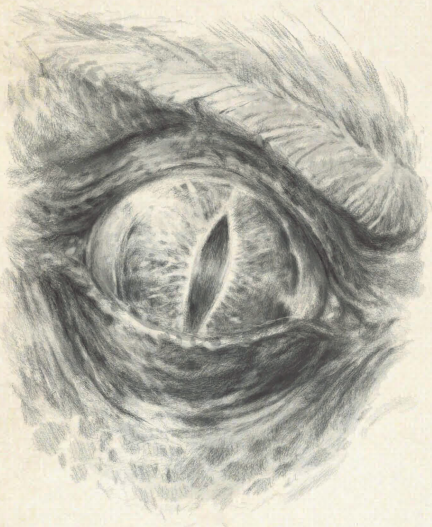
Much like the Eye of Mordor, these rules measure Dragon Awareness and the Hunt Threshold.

Dragon Awareness

This measures how aware the Dragon is of the company. As the company leaves Erebor, Dragon Awareness starts at 0, modified as follows:

- +**0** for each Hobbit
- +**1** for each Man or Elf
- +**2** for each Dwarf
- +**1** additionally for each companion with a Wisdom or Valour of 4 or more
- +**1** additionally for each Famous Weapon or Armour

If the company is indiscrete about their plans, word will reach the ears of Lord Hakon and soon make it to Morlach and thence to the Dragon. Increase Dragon Awareness by +4 if the company speaks too loudly of their secret mission from King Dáin.



Raising Awareness

Dragon Awareness increases by +1 each day that passes. (This is a change from the regular Eye of Mordor rules, and reflects the need for haste in this adventure.)

Dragon Awareness increases by +1 whenever an eye is rolled on the Feat die outside of combat.

Other encounters and hazards can also increase Awareness; such instances are noted in the individual encounters. The Loremaster should also increase Dragon Awareness if the company attract undue attention through odd behaviour, loud boasting, profligate spending or other strangeness.

Unlike the Eye of Mordor, the Dragon's awareness of the company is not increased through Shadow gain or the use of magic.

Hunt Thresholds

Different regions have different Hunt Thresholds. Whenever the Dragon Awareness total exceeds the Hunt Threshold, it triggers a Hunt Episode where the Dragon takes action against the company. See below for examples of possible Hunt Episodes.

Region Threshold:

Northern Dalelands	18
The Waste	14
Withered Heath	12

After a Hunt

Dragon Awareness resets to its starting value after a Hunt Episode, as the Dragon assumes it has dealt with the threat. However, the Dragon's flames grow hotter each time it hunts (see below).

The Growing Fires

As they draw closer to the Dragon's lair, they see signs of his growing fires. The flames grow brighter over time, as the Dragon waxes wroth. The visible signs depend on the number of Hunt Episodes that have occurred.

0: The air is unwholesomely hot and heavy.

1: A column of black smoke stains the horizon, giving the Company a clear mark to aim for.

2: The small scrub forests near the Watchtower are alight, and their flames can be seen for miles. Afterwards, all that remains is a blasted and withered landscape of skeletal ashen trees.

3: The smell of ash and sulphur on the wind grows stronger. The stench is foul and at times makes it hard to breathe. Smaller jets of steam burst from cracks in the ground, as the Dragon's growing power corrupts the very land.

4+: A hellish glow seen at night from within the Watchtower, as though the heart of the mountain is on fire. Rumblings that might be earthquakes or the passage of the Dragon tremble through the earth.

Hunt Episodes

Unfriendly Eyes (*Part Three*): Crebain and other unfriendly birds fly overhead. The Company's Look-out may attempt to hide from these watchers with a **Stealth** test (use the current Dragon Awareness as the TN). If the test fails, the crebain spot the Look-out and report back to the Dragon. Reset Dragon Awareness back to its starting level and increase the Growing Fires as normal, then add +4 to Dragon Awareness.

Rumbles in the Earth: The ground trembles and groans as the Dragon stirs. All members of the company must make a Corruption test (TN 14); those who fail gain a point of Shadow, and quail in the face of such a primordial monster.

Servants of the Dragon (From *Part Four* onwards): A band of Orcs ambushes the Company. The Orcs fight under the banner of the Dragon – they are from one of the war-bands that serve the monster, anticipating looting and carnage when the Dragon finally rises from its bed in the watchtower and goes south to Dale.

The Burning Land (From *Part Four* onwards): The Dragon's growing fires have set the countryside alight, and the company's path leads through wildfires. They may take another route - all Scouts may make **Explore** tests; if no-one succeeds, the company loses a day's travel and may try again the next day, or they can brave the flames – each companion makes an **Athletics** test; failure means the character is burnt and gains Fatigue equal to the roll of a Success die.

The Hunting Dragon (From *Part Five* onwards): The Dragon rises from its bed and goes hunting. If the Dragon is Wruenele, then the Company have little hope of battling the flying Dragon in the open, and must hide from him (**Stealth** tests are at TN 14; one of those who fails is attacked by the Dragon's breath weapon).

If the Dragon is Raenar, then the Company may (foolishly) choose to attack him in the open, in which case battle is joined. The Dragon retreats if Wounded or reduced to half its starting Endurance, covering its retreat with a thick cloud of impenetrable ash.

Preparing for the Journey

In a normal adventure, the company are assumed to prepare thoroughly for their journey, and there is no need to play through the purchasing of provisions, assembly of gear, hiring of mounts and other quotidian elements of an expedition into the Wild. In this adventure, however, the company are up against a time limit.

If King Dáin agrees to outfit the company, they can leave immediately and preparing takes no time. Otherwise, they must make a **Travel** test to secure the necessary equipment quickly and efficiently.

The difficulty for this test is TN 16, modified as follows:

-2 if any member of the company is a resident in good standing in Dale or Erebor
-1 per point of Treasure spent purchasing gear
-2 per previous attempt on this test

Only one attempt may be made per day. If the test fails, the company has failed to gather what they need, and must wait a day before venturing forth. If they wish to start travelling without all necessary supplies, they may do so at added risk: for the rest of the journey, any Feat die result of 1 counts as an for the purpose of determining the presence of Hazards.

Hearing Stories about Dragons

Each member of the company may make a **Lore, Song** or **Riddle** test to recall useful facts about Dragons and how to slay them. Each success gives the company one of the following bits of lore, which translates to an additional success die that can be used later in the adventure when battling the Dragon (the Loremaster should keep track of how many dice the company earn). These success

dice form a common pool, usable by all heroes in the company.

The company may also choose to wait in Erebor and consult with sages, skalds, lore-masters and old greybeards in inns; each day spent researching gives another piece of valid lore.

- Some Dragons are hot and breathe fire. Their lesser cousins, the Cold-drakes, are cold and breathe out poisonous vapours. Whether these Cold-drakes are a different breed wrought by the Enemy in the elder days, or if they are Dragons whose fires have gone out, none but the Wise can guess. It's pointless asking Dragons themselves about the matter, for all that a given Dragon cares about is itself, and it always assumes that it is the very model and paragon of the form.

- Dragons have a soft underbelly – it's the only place where they are really vulnerable.

- Dragons can confuse their victims with spells and foul vapours. One must be stern of will when facing them. (**Wisdom** helps resist many of their abilities.)

- They delight in riddles, and *cannot* resist playing the riddle-game if challenged... (**Riddle**)

- And they delight in flattery all the more. The more absurd and obsequious the better – and the more powerful and egotistical the Dragon, the better. (**Courtesy**)

- They were made by the Enemy to serve in his terrible wars. They are creatures of utter malice; cruelty and greed vie for dominance in their hearts. (**Insight**)

- Their senses are very keen, but they can be confused by unfamiliar smells. If you bring something they have not smelled before, like a rare perfume (or a Hobbit) it baffles them. (**Stealth**)

- Like snakes, they eat heavily when they feast, and take some time to sleep off a big meal. In such moods, they can be drowsy and vulnerable – or even lulled into a deeper sleep through song. (**Song** or **Hunting**)

The Last Homely House

The company's first lodging after leaving Erebor, if they want to sleep in a bed and not outdoors, is at the house of Ginar, a Dwarf farmer. He and his wife Kona were wandering smiths until the Mountain was reclaimed and they could come home. They found, however, that they had lost their taste for living underground, and preferred wind and sun to the caves and tunnels below. Ginar's house sits in a most unusual valley where the Northern Dalelands, the Upper Marches and the Wastes all converge.

Encountering Ginar

Ginar welcomes travellers, as long as they are polite, so there is no need for a full encounter. A little **Courtesy** goes a long way.

- He has no supplies to share beyond a little food. If the company are in need of stores or advice, he recommends the House of Brech, another two days' travel north. He warns that Skarf, the lord of Brech, is not the most welcoming of hosts, but he knows the

Wastes. It is better to take the longer route via Brech rather than head straight for the Watchtower.

- He asks no questions about the company's purpose, but if they give away the mission, increase Dragon Awareness by 1 – Ginar cannot resist gossiping.

The Other Guests

The company are not the only guests at the farmstead this night; Greystroke and Skirfira are also resting here. Greystroke sits in the corner, running her fingers over the runes on the haft of her long spear and drinking heavily, while Skirfira talks nervously with Ginar and Kona. The older Dwarves do not approve of a young Dwarf-maid running about adventuring, and Skirfira knows better than to admit why she and Greystroke are travelling north.

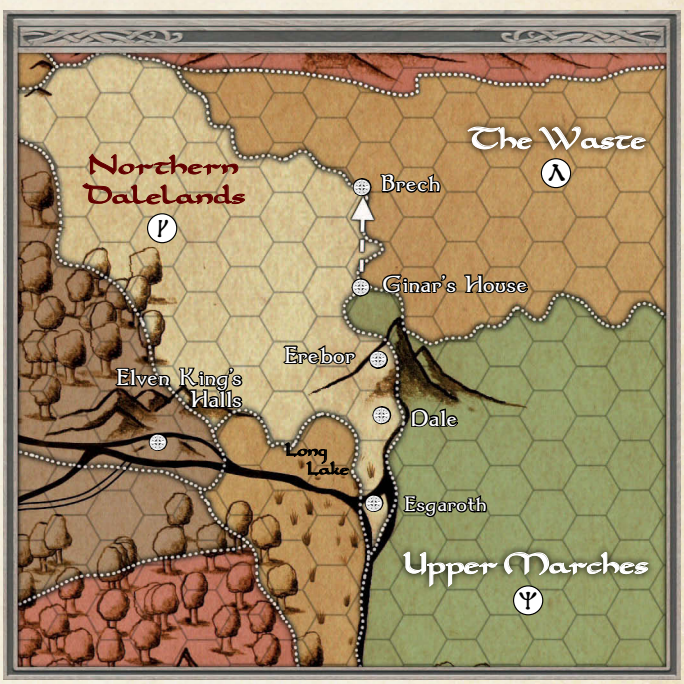
Greystroke, when she sees the company, is less willing to be circumspect. *"So, Dáin is not a gambler like his cousin must have been. He doesn't wager the safety of his kingdom on one band of rag-tag adventurers – he sends a whole army of vagabonds, in the hope that one will survive."* She taps her chest lightly with the head of the spear. *"The Dragon is mine. My foe. My kill. Mine."* With that, she stumbles to bed, dragging the spear with her. Anyone who disturbs her slumber gets a spear in the heart.

Skirfira apologises for her companion's rude behaviour – Greystroke is in a fey mood, she says, a death-wish. Such black moods often overcome her. Once their task is revealed to the company, she expresses excitement. All her life she has studied Dragons, and now she will see one in the flesh!

- Part Three -
The Shadow of his Wings

The first part of the journey is a short one, from Ginar's house to the small hamlet of Brech on the edge of the Waste, around thirty-five miles north of Erebor. After getting a warm goodbye from Skirfira, and a sullen stare from Greystroke, the company depart Ginar's farm. Skirfira and Greystroke do not intend to visit Brech – ignoring Ginar's advice, they head due north, straight into the Waste.

Setting a reasonable pace and keeping to the easier terrain of the Northern Dalelands, the company can expect to reach Brech after two days of travel (remember to note the time passing, as the longer the company spend travelling, the riskier the final battle becomes). A single **Travel** test is required at TN 14 to avoid fatigue.



There are no roads in good repair in this part of the world. The majority of trade from Erebor flows west and south and occasionally east, but directly north of

the Lonely Mountain is nought but empty lands in this century. The Bardings that have started to rebuild the Northern Dalelands mainly keep to the west. Sometimes, the company can follow an old Dwarf-road that once ran to some lost hold in the Grey Mountains, but these soon vanish beneath the grass, lost to the memory of mortal folk.

Rumour of the Lands

Call for a **Hunting** test from the Company's scout (TN 16). If successful, the scout spots tracks along the way, and can discern the following information:

- There are at least two other groups of travellers ahead of the company on the road.
- One group consists of many Dwarves, a dozen or so. They march fast, as though eager to get ahead of their competitors. (The Brothers Khuldrim)
- The second is a lone traveller, mounted on a horse. Despite this advantage, he is pacing himself for a difficult journey. (Lord Elstan)

Brech

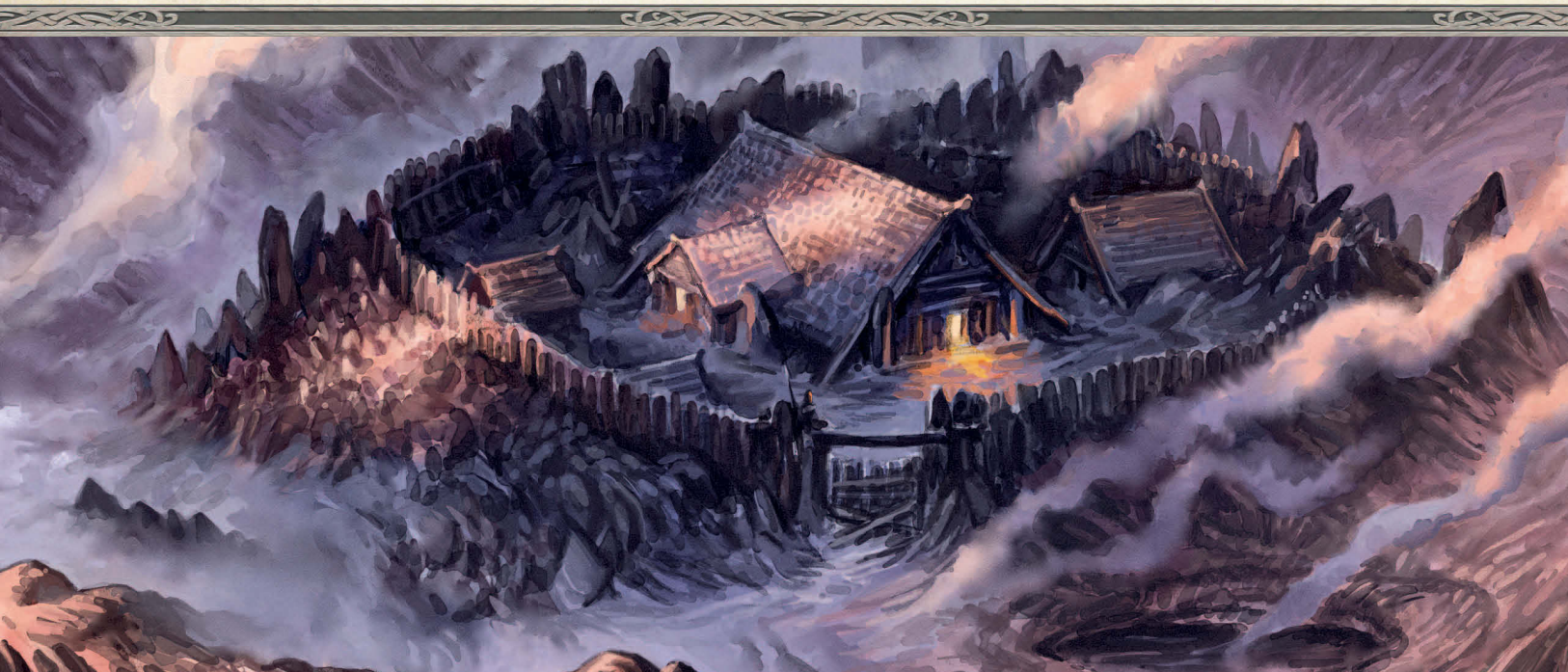
Brech is the home of Skarf Skulson. It is a large house on a hill, well-fortified and surrounded by a stake-topped earthen mound, inhabited by Skarf and his family and retainers. In his youth, he was a ne'er-do-well and bully in Lake-town, in the service of the old Master, and companions who visited Esgaroth in those days may remember Skarf with little fondness. He came north to look for the lost treasure taken by the Master, and discovered that living on the edge of the world with few other folk around to annoy him suited him just fine. He does know the Waste very well, and may have news of the Dragon or of the best route to the Watchtower – but the Company cannot expect a warm welcome.

It is twilight as the company approach Brech's low hill. The wind blows from the east, out of the night, and carries with it the sulphurous stink of the Wastes. Lights burn in the hall, though, and it seems, hard as it is to believe, that a party is in full swing in this lonely hall!

Villainy Upon Villainy

Some years ago, Skarf Skulson made the error of trespassing too close to the Watchtower, and the Dragon sensed him. The wyrm's voice spoke to him out of a deep fissure in the ground, rumbling like an earthquake, and warned him that if he did not flee, he would be burnt to a cinder on the spot. Skarf, though a scoundrel and a thief, was never accounted a coward – but he had never met a Dragon before, and the threat of *burning* terrified him to his core. Since then, he has been a creature of the Dragon.

When dealing with Men or even Dwarves, he is as callous and cruel as ever, but now he lives in constant terror of the Dragon's wrath.



Lord Elstan was the first to reach Brech – the old knight wanted to sleep in a bed one more time before crossing the Waste, and he assumed that any loyal subject of King Bard or King Dáin would offer him shelter. Skarf grudgingly let the knight stay, but when Elstan (forgetting the Dwarf king's warning) spoke of his great quest to slay the wyrm, Skarf was terrified.

Then the Brothers Khuldrim arrived. The Dwarves are doughty warriors, and were lured by the thought of the hoard, but had their own doubts about fighting an *actual* Dragon. In conversation with Skarf, they learned that the hoard of the Watchtower, while impressive, is the tiniest fraction of the golden bed of Smaug the Unassessably Wealthy, and victory in this quest will not bring them the fortunes they hope for. The two groups of villains – Skarf and the Dwarves – decided that it would be best for all concerned if the Quest failed, and if the troublesome knight never made it to the mountain. Lord Elstan was already snoring in the corner, so dealing with him was easy. Skarf ensured the knight would not anger the Dragon, and the Dwarves looted Lord Elstan's gear.

And as they celebrate their foul deed, the company come knocking on the doors...

Avoiding Brech

Should the company choose to avoid Brech, then the weather worsens as they make camp for the night. This region of Middle-earth rarely sees heavy downpours, but tonight the clouds burst across the Waste. The scout may make an Explore test (TN 16) to find shelter; otherwise, the company must either ask Skarf for hospitality, or else have a sleepless night on the edge of the Waste, and begin the second phase of their journey without rest. (Each hero gains 1 Fatigue and must pass a Corruption test or gain 1 Shadow).

Optionally, the company might encounter some of the Brothers Khuldrim carrying the bound and unconscious Lord Elstan out into the waste – see Lord Elstan, page 81.

Sinister Welcomes

"Ho there," calls a voice, "are ye Men or Dwarves or Orcs?"

Assuming the company aren't actively hostile, the lookout – one of the sons of Skarf – tells them that they may enter the ring of Brech, but they must leave their weapons outside the hall in his care. A successful **Awe** or **Courtesy** test sways the young man, and he grudgingly allows them to keep their arms.

Inside, the hall is lit by a roaring fire. A suckling pig turns on a spit above the flames. There's a strong smell of drink. As the companions enter, a dozen faces turn to see them, and more than half those faces are hidden behind bushy Dwarf beards and wide bright grins. Seated in the place of honour at the head of the hall is an older Dwarf who seems less merry than the rest, and by his side is a small man, grey-haired, with a pock-marked face and a cloak of fur. The company might guess that this is Skarf, the master of Brech. He leaps from his chair and comes down to greet them.

Encountering Skarf

The players may assume that the purpose of this encounter is to convince Skarf to let them stay in his hall. It's not – it's to convince Skarf that he shouldn't allow the Dwarves to ambush them like Lord Elstan. If the company convince Skarf that they're not going after the Dragon, or if they exceed all expectations and manage to convince him that they can actually slay the Dragon and free him from its thrall, then he will protect them from the Dwarves' treachery. However, if he believes they're going to merely anger the Dragon and draw it down upon him, then he'll help the Dwarves murder the companions in the night.

Set Tolerance

Skarf's initial Tolerance is equal to the highest Valour in the company, modified as follows:

-1 if any of the companions knew him in Lake-town
-1 if there is an Elf in the party

Interaction

If the company openly state they're going to slay the Dragon, they must do so with **Awe** (TN 20); using any other skill is an automatic failure that counts triply

against Tolerance. If successful, then it counts as two bonus successes (in addition to any extra successes from a great or extraordinary roll).

If they attempt to hide their intentions, they must use **Riddle**. Prompted by the Dwarves, Skarf asks the company several prying questions about their purpose – **Insight** suggests that he suspects they're going after the Dragon. Again, these questions can be deflected with **Riddle**, but each failed test counts against Tolerance.

If the company ask for shelter and lodging with **Courtesy**, then Skarf says he will consider letting them stay, but as they can plainly see, he is hosting a company of Dwarven heroes, the Brothers Khuldrim, and finding a spare bed may be difficult!

If any of the company mention the customs of hospitality, or suggest that as a good man of Dale, Skarf is honour-bound to give them shelter on such a horrible night, call for an **Insight** test again. If successful, the character notices that this line of conversation is exceedingly uncomfortable for Skarf, and that only **Inspire** will do (TN 20). Again, if successful, this counts as two bonus successes. If **Inspire** is not used after opening this particular conversational gambit, or if the roll fails, it counts as three failures.

The company may use **Courtesy** to ask for advice on crossing the waste. If successful, Skarf tells them about the current state of the Waste, which may well help when avoiding getting *Lost in the Wastes* (page 83).

Resolution

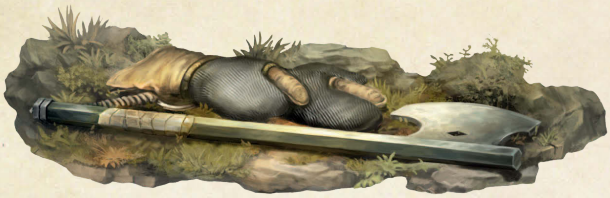
If the companions exceed Tolerance, then use the entry for **1-2 (Narrow Success),** below, but Skarf's protestations at not having room are perfunctory at best. He offers them food and drink for the evening, a bed for the night, and to speed them on their way before the dawn. See *Attack By Night*, below, for what happens instead. Otherwise, compare the number of successful rolls the companions have achieved so far with the entries below:

1-2. (Narrow Success): Skarf declares that his house is full, and he can't take in every vagabond who shows up on his doorstep. The Brothers Khuldrim were there first, so the companions should go! A successful **Insight** tests suggests that Skarf is deliberately trying to drive the company away. Immediately, one of the Dwarves jumps up and says that the Brothers will make room, that they don't mind getting cozy with such heroes as these *Dragon-slayers* must be! If the company press to stay, Skarf shrugs and pretends to be persuaded by the Dwarves (in which case, run *Attack by Night* when the time comes.) If they leave, he sends a warning to the Dragon about the danger – see *Slipping Out*, below.

3-4. (Success): Skarf is torn. He knows that the safest thing to do is to kill the player-heroes, but he can't quite bring himself to do it – they've woken some nobler impulse in him. He allows them to stay, but gets drunker and drunker as the night goes on. He'll even point them to some of the clues in *Something Amiss*, below. For example, he might ask them if they want to buy a horse, or start singing a song about Lord Elstan's exploits.

5-6. (Great Success): Skarf realises that he has made a terrible mistake in serving the Dragon, and compounded it by allying with the Dwarves. He allows the company to stay, but during the evening, he takes the highest-Wisdom companion aside and confides in her, admitting that he conspired with the Dwarves to murder Lord Elstan. Now, he and his family are at risk – will the companions save Brech from his villainous guests?

7+. (Extraordinary Success): Skarf is driven mad with guilt! The brave or wise words of the company have shown him the error of his ways, and only blood can wash away blood! If he acts now, Elstan might yet be saved. He leaps up, shouting that the Dwarves are murderers, and dashes Khuldri's skull open on the hearth! The Dwarves immediately stab Skarf to death, but his sacrifice gives the companions time to grab their weapons.



Something Amiss

In between feasting and talking with the Dwarves, the companions may notice the following clues that something is amiss with a successful roll (or better yet, an appropriate trait invocation; traits are perfect for picking up on subtle clues without rolling. *You're Suspicious by nature, so you're the first to notice that something isn't quite right...*). The Loremaster doesn't need to include all of these clues – give each companion one opportunity to realise the danger.

- **Awareness:** There's plenty of ale, but the Brothers Khuldrim aren't drinking heavily. They're making a big show of being drunk, but they're just sipping their drinks as if biding their time.

- **Search:** You spot one of the serving-girls scrubbing away at a reddish stain on the floorboards. It looks like spilled blood.

- **Travel:** There are more travelling packs stacked by the wall than there are Dwarves in the hall. Where are the rest?

- **Craft:** One of the Dwarves is eating from a fine silver plate that bears the arms of Dale. Where did he get such a treasure? You recall such items being given as gifts by King Bard to his trusted knights.

- **Song:** Two of the Dwarves are humming a song as they wash their weary feet. It's the *Lay of Elstan,* a popular song in Dale describing the heroic deeds of Lord Elstan. They grin cruelly when the song ends.

- **Explore:** There's a horse in the stables at the back of the Ring of Brech. Unlike the other animals there, this is clearly a fine war-horse fit for a tall knight.

- **Insight:** Skarf's daughters and servants seem nervous and fearful around the Dwarves.

Slipping Out

If the company leave before the Dwarves can waylay them, then Skarf reports the news to the Dragon. Raise Dragon Awareness by 2, or by 4 if the company openly admitted their intent to slay the monster.

Attack By Night

If the company do not become suspicious, and actually sleep in the hall, then the Dwarves attack them at night. One companion chosen at random may make an **Awareness** test to wake up in time; on a great success, she may alert one other companion; on an extraordinary success, two others. In addition, anyone with a suitable trait (like *Wary* or *Quick of Hearing*) may invoke it to get an **Awareness** test. Companions who wake in time may fight normally – although they're not wearing their armour, and their main weapons might be outside the hall.

Companions who are stabbed in their sleep are automatically hit, and lose 6 Endurance. These attacks count as Piercing blows, so the companions must make Protection tests against the Dwarven dagger's Injury score of 12. (A player may spend a point of Hope to invoke **Body** as an Attribute Bonus as normal.)

The Battle of Brech

There are two Dwarves per companion. Skarf's kin may take part in the battle, but are easily defeated. Still, they count as two additional Success dice for whichever side they choose. If Skarf fights against the companions, his statistics are below; if he fights for the companions, he reduces the number of Dwarves by two before dying.

Skarf, Lord of Brech

Attribute Level	
4	
Endurance	Hate
20	2
Parry	Armour
4	3d
Skills	
Personality, 3	Survival, 4
Movement, 2	Custom, 2
Perception, 3	Vocation, 2
Weapon Skills	
Great Axe	4
Special Abilities	
Great Leap	-

Weapons:

Weapon type	Damage	Edge	Injury	Called Shot
Great Axe	9	👁	20	Break Shield

Dwarven Assassin

Swiftly do the hearts of the Dwarves turn dark and cold.

Attribute Level	
3	
Endurance	Hate
18	3
Parry	Armour
5	3d
Skills	
Personality, 1	Survival, 3
Movement, 2	Custom, 2
Perception, 2	Vocation, 3
Weapon Skills	
Axe	3
Dagger	2
Special Abilities	
No Quarter	Savage Assault
Craven	-

Weapons:

Weapon type	Damage	Edge	Injury	Called Shot
Axe	5	👁	18	Break Shield
Dagger	3	👁	12	-

Possible Complications in the Battle

The following events can be employed to enliven the fight.

- **The Burning Hall:** The Dwarves set the roof of the hall on fire. For the rest of the battle, whenever a combatant rolls an 👁 on the Feat die, he or she loses Endurance equal to the roll of a success die. After the first round, anyone who rolls an 👁 or a 1 on the Feat Die takes damage; after the second, a roll of an 👁, 1 or 2 takes damage and so on. Only a fool fights in a burning house.

- **The Laughter of Dragons:** The storm breaks over Brech. Thunder and lightning crash overhead. If a companion rolls a ᚠ when attempting to *Intimidate Foes*, the skies flashes as if in answer, and the enemies

lose another Success die's worth of Hate in addition to the normal amount.

- **Out of the Frying Pan:** One of Skarf's daughters throws a pan full of sizzling bacon fat into the face of a foe (either a companion or a Dwarf). The victim of this attack loses 1 Endurance every turn until they spend their action wiping the fat away.

The Brothers Khuldrim

The Brothers Khuldri and Skuldri were renowned heroes of Erebor, but Skuldri died and Khuldri fell in with a bad crowd of brigands. He is still of high Standing in Erebor, but his travelling companions are the worst sort of Dwarves, more interested in treasure than great deeds – and they are willing to stoop to murder when it suits them.

After The Battle

If Skarf lives, he may be convinced (through **Persuade** or **Inspire**, depending on how the encounter played out) to tell the companions what really happened at Brech, and begs the company to go after Lord Elstan. Even if killed, he might confess the knight's murder with his dying breath.

Should the company defeat the Brothers Khuldrim, they may obtain fresh supplies and guidance at Brech for the second part of their journey; this aid is worth two bonus Success dice to use when crossing the Waste.

The Lost Knight

Searching the Dwarves' belongings – or questioning survivors after the battle – confirms that the Dwarves attacked Lord Elstan. Notably, one of the Dwarves has the Aegis of Dale hidden in a sack.

After knocking Elstan unconscious, three of the Dwarves went out into the Waste to find a place to hide the body. They may be encountered in *Lord Elstan's Grave*, page 81.

Following the trail of the Dwarves requires a **Hunting** test and brings the company *Across the New Desolation*.

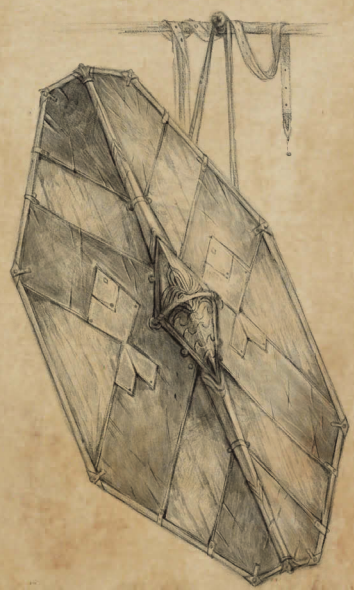
The Aegis of Dale

The Dwarves of Erebor made this shield for an ancient Lord of Dale in the first days of that realm. Chased in mithril and enchanted with potent runes, the shield was recovered from the hoard of Smaug by the companions of Thorin Oakenshield, and gifted back to King Bard. It is part of the crown jewels of Dale, but King Bard allows one of his champions to carry it.

Type: Shield
Craftsmanship: Dwarven
Banes: N/A

Qualities:

1. Fireproof: Once per battle, the wielder does not suffer harm from any source of flame, including Dragon fire, for a number of rounds equal to their Valour.
2. Superior Reinforced: Increases the Shield's Parry bonus by 2. The shield cannot be smashed. Additionally, if the wielder's Valour is 4 or more, once per battle when an enemy hits without scoring a Piercing blow, they miss instead.
3. Cunning Make: Reduces the Shield's Encumbrance by 2



- Part Four -
Across the New Desolation

Between the northern edge of the lands of Men, and the mountains of the Dragons, lies the Waste: a trackless, uninhabitable, bitter region of broken stone and dust. Crossing the Waste takes at least a week, requiring two Fatigue tests at TN 18. However, many of the Hazards and Perils in this section may delay the company further, making the final battle with the Dragon even more dangerous.

The Loremaster should employ the Hazard episodes listed here as dictated normally by Journey rolls, and describe the rest of the journey using the various Encounters and Perils listed below (alternate between Encounters and Perils as needed). It is not required to run all the Encounters or Perils.

Hazards

The following paragraphs describe potential hazards for the journey through the Wastes (all the episodes described use special rules, and thus are not formatted in the usual way).

Maggots (Hunter)

Somehow, the company's food supplies become infested with huge slimy maggots that are native to this part of the world. Very little is salvageable – and worse, there is little game to be caught in the Waste. The company must choose one of the following two options:

- Press on towards the Watchtower. All Huntsmen may make **Hunting** tests at TN 20. If no-one succeeds, the company are all considered Weary until they find food.

- Turn south, where there is better prospect of finding food. This costs the company a number of days equal to the roll of a Success die, but the **Hunting** tests are at TN 14 instead.

No Way Forward (Scout)

It should be easy to find a way to the Watchtower – all the company need to do is keep walking towards the burning mountain on the horizon. However, as Frodo and Sam discovered in the Emyn Muil, just knowing where you're going doesn't mean you can see a route to get there. The company encounter a broken landscape of jagged rocks, blind canyons, and sudden steep cliffs. They cannot move forward until their Scouts succeed at an **Explore** test. Each attempt by the company costs a day.

Raging River (Guide)

The Guide's route goes along the bank of a dry valley – or what's usually a dry valley. The storms of recent days have turned the gulch into a torrent of icy black water mixed with silt and ash. The Guide may choose to turn back and find another route (in which case this counts as *No Way Forward*) or risk pressing on by making a **Travel** test (TN 18).

If the test fails, one of the companions falls into the river when the bank collapses and is swept away. The company must search for their missing friend – see *Lost in the Wastes*, page 83.

Walking Stones (Look-Out)

Those stones... were they always there? At twilight, it seems to the Look-out that piles of stones are creeping closer and closer to the company. Every time she looks, those rocks appear nearer and nearer. The hero may rouse the company and get them to move camp (everyone gains 1 Fatigue), or ignore the impossible walking stones (in which case the Loremaster should roll a Success die; on a 4 or more, one of the companions suddenly finds himself buried. He can be dug out of this sudden cairn, but gains 2 Shadow points and a number of Fatigue points equal to the roll of a Success die.

Dreams of Fire (Any Companion)
The character is troubled by dreams of being burnt to death by Dragon-fire. On waking, the character must make a Corruption test. If the roll fails, the character gains 1 Shadow point immediately, and another Shadow point whenever he or she is attacked by a Dragon's breath weapon or sees another companion perish in flames.

Scorpion in the Bed (Any Companion)
One of the venomous creatures of the Waste crawls into the character's sleeping roll. The character is allowed an **Awareness** test to detect the danger; otherwise, the companion is Poisoned, and cannot travel until the poison is treated using **Healing** (TN 18, one attempt each day).

Ash Cloud (All)
A choking storm of ash and dust blows down without warning from the north, reducing visibility to next to nothing. All the Companions need to make **Search** tests or be separated. All those who succeed stay together; those who fail wander off and find themselves in a labyrinth of echoing canyons. See *Lost in the Wastes*, page 83.

Seen By Orcs
Orc scouts spot the company at a distance. Raise the Dragon Awareness by the roll of a Success die.

Choking Thirst (All)
The unseasonable heat and unutterable dryness of the dust means the company go through their water supplies faster than they should. Each member of the company must choose:

- Ration their water and travel only in the earlier, cooler hours, adding another three days and another Fatigue test to their trek.
- Search for drinkable water on the way – this requires an **Explore** roll at TN 18 from the Company's scout. If successful, the Scout finds water. Otherwise, the company becomes Weary until they find water.

Encounters
The following scenes don't pose an immediate threat to the company, although few things in the Waste can truly said to be friendly.

Birds in an Empty Sky
The presence of the Dragon has begun a new desolation on the Waste. As the wyrm's fires grow hotter, they burn the living land, until nothing good can live there – not that much good lived here before the Dragon, anyway. Now, though, even the few animals who lived in or passed through the Wastes are fleeing. The company spot a flight of birds circling down to the east. Anyone with at least **Hunting** or **Travel** at 2 or more guesses they're in search of drinkable water. Following the birds costs a day's travel time, but brings the company to a small pool of fresh water.

- A Hunter can easily (**Hunting**, TN 10) trap a few birds here to eat, and the water is good to drink.

- If the company can communicate with birds (*Raven of the Mountain, The Speakers*, a blessing from Beorn or some other gift), then the birds can give the same advice as Witherfinger, below.

Witherfinger

A dead – well, mostly dead – tree, withered and bare stands rooted in the dusty banks of a dry river valley. It's the only tree for miles around, not that it's much of a tree. Hunched and thin, leafless and twisted, gnawed by worms, but still it cheers the spirit. Whatever else, it has endured in the midst of the desolation.

Companions who have played through **The Watch on the Heath** in *Tales from Wilderland* recognise the tree as the mysterious Witherfinger. For those encountering her for the first time, Witherfinger is perhaps a tree that has grown wakeful, or a woman grown tree-like, or something else entirely. A few years ago, she remembered how to speak in the manner of two-legged things, but her wanderings in the wastes have sapped her spirit, and now she can communicate only in dreams.

Should a character take an axe to Witherfinger's hoary hide, she hurls a cloud of dust and small stones at the company, blinding them all for a moment. When their vision clears, she is gone. However, should a character rest amid Witherfinger's roots, they find a comfortable bed of moss there to lie upon. Resting there cures Fatigue equal to the character's Wisdom, or restores a point of Hope (companion's choice). In addition, Witherfinger whispers in the companion's dreams. In the dream, the companion hears the crotchety voice of a nervous, somewhat rambling but kindly old woman. She might say:

- *"Oh and oh. Dark-hearted Dwarves they are, murderous and greedy. They kidnapped that poor old man and threw him down a hole, and stole all his shiny armour. Not fair, not fair at all. Will no-one help him?"* The companion sees Lord Elstan (see Lord **Elstan's Grave**, below) in the pit where the Dwarves threw him. Taking a detour to aid Lord Elstan costs a day and a Fatigue test (TN 18).

- *"Orcs! I hate Orcs! Nasty mean axe-y brutes. Never good for no-one. I watched 'em throw the big one out, drove him away with fire, but he's worse than any of them. He wanted to go south, you know. South, to the dark land. To His land. Mordor."* The companion glimpses Ukghash (overleaf) making his way across the ravines.

- *"Them traitors! Never ought good came out of a cold Dwarf's heart! Lying in wait, they are, with murder in mind! Beware 'em!"* The companion has a vision of the *Dwarf Ambush* (page 84), if that is still a possibility. This warning gives two bonus Success dice for Awareness tests to anticipate ambush.

- If any of the company fall victim to *The Haunted Lake* (page 84), then Witherfinger can help their companions deal with the spirit. *"They're down there, in the waters. Swim down and fetch 'em up before they're stuck down there forever. Here, I'll aid thee."* Her assistance gives three bonus Success dice that can be spent on **Athletics** or **Inspire** rolls made in the lake.

Lord Elstan's Grave

After the Brothers Khuldrim stabbed Lord Elstan in his sleep at Brech, in the House of Skarf, two of them carried him out into the wastes, planning to dump his body in a convenient ditch and return to their beds; however, Elstan managed to wrest himself free of their clutches and ran off into the night. The two Dwarves pursued, and after many misadventures in the Waste they eventually caught up with the old knight, stabbed him again for good measure, and then threw him in a hole. The two villainous Dwarves are still wandering the Waste (and may be encountered in *Dwarf Ambush*, page 84).

Lord Elstan, twice-stabbed and his ankle twisted, now lies at the bottom of a steep-sided sinkhole. The company may find him by following his trail with **Hunting**, or be guided here by a dream or portent – or maybe they just hear his weak calls for help.

Rescuing the knight requires an **Athletics** test to climb down; failure means the companion loses a Success die's worth of Endurance from scrapes and cuts. *"Bless you, youngsters. Those wretched Dwarves attacked me as I slept, and stole my sword and shield. Witless I wandered in the wastes, until they came at me again and imprisoned me here. They are in league with the Dragon, I guess, and*

mean to stop any of us from reaching the Watchtower. I do not know if I can make it – go on without me!"

A **Healing** test fixes Elstan's ankle, but his two knife-wounds are infected and likely mortal. Lord Elstan knows this, but makes light of it. *"Oh, I have had worse. Why, at the Battle of Five Armies, this big Cave-Troll caught me by the legs and lifted me up to gnaw on me like a dog with a beef-bone! I had my dagger to hand, though, and knew what to do! One cut across the nose, to startle him, and then I drove the blade elbow-deep into his eyesocket! Better'n than sunlight for killing a troll you know! But aye, I think this is my last quest for King Bard. I'll go home and rest. What was it the funny little man said – live happily to the end of my days. However long they may be."*

It takes an extraordinary success on the **Healing** test, or the use of a Virtue like *Staunching Song*, to cure the wounds.

If the company ask Elstan to accompany them, the old man slows them down and is too weak to fight. They travel at only half their normal speed. However, his company cheers them and he is full of wisdom and good advice – each member of the company may regain a point of Hope and mark Advancement Points in three different skill groups of their choice, thanks to Lord Elstan's tutelage.

If they escort Elstan to safety at the edge of the Wastes, it takes one day there and one day to return. They gain no benefit from doing so, but do not accrue Shadow. If the company abandon Elstan or let the old man stumble homewards alone, they each gain 2 Shadow points.

The Burnt Orc

A band of Orcs serve the Dragon (see *Battling the Orcs*, page 87). Once, this band followed another chieftain, Ukghash. When Sauron declared in Mordor, in the Year 2951, Ukghash heard the call of the Dark Lord. At the time, the Orcs dwelt in caves in the Grey Mountains, but Ukghash drove and dragged and harried them south and east, always south and east, towards the Dark Tower.

When the Orcs came close to the Watchtower, one of Ukghash's lieutenants, a treacherous Orc named Haglach rebelled against the chieftain and offered the tribe's loyalty to the Dragon. Why sneak past the watchful men of Dale and the Dwarves of the Lonely Mountain, or brave the darkness of the Spider-thronged forest, when they could serve the Dragon and eat roasted flesh every night!

Ukghash quarrelled with Haglach, until the Dragon intervened with a fiery blast. Ukghash fled the Dragon's wrath, and ever since has roamed the wastes, hoping to reclaim his place at the head of the tribe. If he could murder Haglach, maybe, or if the Dragon went away south... or if the Dragon died, that would work too... Ukghash, therefore, can be a most unlikely ally for the company.

The companions spot the lone Orc as they travel across the wastes. His face and left arm are still scarred with burns, making him unusually ugly even for an Orc. He stands taller than most of his kind, and there is a dangerous light in his eyes. (The Dark Lord calls him, even now; he is not craven, and can endure sunlight better than most).

Ukghash knows the region well – and he knows that a company of armed adventurers travelling towards the watchtower can only have one purpose. He meets the company at twilight in a region of broken rocks and narrow

ravines, where he can easily vanish if the encounter turns hostile.

If the company move to attack, he turns and flees; he can only be caught with a successful TN 18 **Hunting** or **Search** test. He speaks the Common tongue.

"I am Ukghash, burnt-Orc. You come to kill the Dragon. I want to see him dead, too. We have common cause, you and I."

Ukghash offers to guide the company to the Watchtower. He claims he can get them past Haglach's patrols, bringing them down unseen paths to the Dragon's very doorstep. He won't murder them in their sleep, or bring them into a trap. This he swears in the name of the Dark Lord, in the name of Sauron (and anyone with *Orc-Lore* or *Shadow-Lore* knows that the Enemy does not permit his true name to be spoke aloud, even by his servants – for an Orc, swearing by that name is no small matter, but it is still an oath founded on treachery and cruelty...). In return, he wants them to swear three oaths, in the name of whatever powers they honour.

- First, that they will do Ukghash no harm while they are in the Wastes.
- Second, they will slay the Dragon and Haglach too, but not attack the rest of the Orcs. *"Unless the fools throw themselves on your blades, of course – I'll not gainsay you a kill."*
- Third, Ukghash gets a fair share of the treasure hoard, to do with as he will.

An **Insight** test indicates that Ukghash might indeed hate someone more than the companions. Still, willingly travelling with a creature of the Enemy is worth 1 Shadow point for each member of the company.

If the companions reject Ukghash, but fail to track him down and slay him, he runs back to the Dragon and curries favour by warning of the company's approach. Roll the Feat die and add the result to the Dragon Awareness total, counting ᚠ as zero (the irritated Dragon incinerates Ukghash without listening to him) and an 👁 as 10 (and the Dragon forgives Ukghash and takes the Orc back into his service; add Ukghash to the forces ranged against the company in *Battling the Orcs*, page 87.

Ukghash is an Orc-Chieftain (see *The One Ring Roleplaying Game*, page 239).

Playing Ukghash

You are not a "good orc". In fact, you're worse than any of the others in the tribe – you are a fanatical servant of Sauron, and hear his dread voice more clearly than your kinfolk.

You know that you are making a dangerous gamble by putting yourself in league with Tarks and stunted Dwarves. They will not believe you are their friend, so you must instead show them you are *very very useful*, so they will not attack you.

When Haglach is dead, *then* you kill them. Not before. Not before.

Perils

The following threats might be applied as the consequence of a Hazard or as the Loremaster deems appropriate.

Lost in the Wastes

The Waste is especially perilous this time of year. Even if the company don't roll a Hazard, they still risk getting lost. Their Guide must make a TN 18 **Travel** test to find the right route through the broken lands. (Reduce the difficulty to TN 14 if the company received advice from Skarf (page 75) or have guidance from Ukghash).

If the Guide fails, the company is lost: each Scout must make **Explore** tests (TN 18) until one of them finds a way forward. Each set of tests costs one day.

On a failure with an 👁, that companion becomes separated from the rest of the group and gets lost. A lost companion may be found with a successful **Hunting** test; again, each set of **Hunting** rolls costs a day of travel.

On a ᚠ the company discovers something useful, drinkable water or a good shelter for one night against the horrors of the Waste. All companions can recover 2 Endurance points.

Dwarf Ambush

If the company defeated the Brothers Khuldrim in the House of Brech, then this ambush is barely worthy of the name. The three Dwarves who brought Elstan into the wastes attempt to waylay the company, hoping to steal their food and water.

However, if the company did not face the Brothers Khuldrim at Brech, then this is a much larger ambush. In this case, there are two Dwarves for each companion.

- In either case, the Dwarves hide in tunnels and cracks in the chalky ground of the waste, and wait until the company pass by before emerging and attacking. An **Awareness** test spots the attackers before they strike.

- If the ambush is successful, the Dwarves use snares to entangle the company. These are resolved like Opening Volleys, but inflict no damage. Instead, characters hit by a snare cannot attack until they free themselves with a **Dagger** skill roll (TN 14). Another companion can automatically free an ensnared ally instead of attacking.

The Haunted Lake

The company come across a brown lake of stagnant and foul water. Deaths-head midges rise from its surface as they approach. All the adventurers feel a sudden compulsion to drink the waters. The companion(s) with the highest Wisdom may make a Wisdom test to resist; other characters may make a roll to resist only if they have an appropriate trait like *Wary* or *Stubborn*.

Those who drink instantly fall into an enchanted slumber. A character who didn't drink and who possesses *Shadow-Lore* or another suitable trait guesses that there is an evil spirit dwelling in the lake that has ensorcelled the company.

A successful **Healing** roll awakens one of the sleepers, however the victim quickly falls back to sleep unless they are led away from the lake.

Alternately, a successful **Athletics** test (TN 10 for Hobbits, 12 for Elves and Dwarves, 14 for Men) can be used to carry a companion away.

It takes hours to coax or drag a victim away from the lake, and each set of rescue attempts by the wakeful companions costs a day. Characters freed from the lake's enchantment cannot help rescue others — only those who initially resisted are immune.

A companion touching the water receives a vision of a grand feast in the manner of the legends of older days. In the vision, a hooded skeletal figure sits at the head of the feast-table in the bottom of the lake, surrounded by the spirit-forms of the sleepers. This shadow – a Lake-Wight, perhaps – serves the sleepers food and drink, but the more they eat, the weaker and more emaciated their dream-selves become.

Swimming to the bottom of the lake requires an **Athletics** test; failure means the character loses a Success die worth of Endurance. Once there, an **Inspire** test lets the character wake the sleepers (two sleepers on a great Success, three on an extraordinary success).

If a hero frees a companion's spirit from the lake, then that companion is no longer under the effect of the spell and can assist in rescuing others.

Failing with an ᛟ means the swimmer is caught by the evil spell. The swimmer's body floats back to the surface, while the swimmer's spirit joins the feast below.

If by terrible mischance, the whole company falls victim to the lake, then perhaps they might be rescued by **Witherfinger** (page 81) or **Ukghash** (page 82).

Once the company escape the enchantment, they may dredge the mud at the bottom of the lake if they wish. Doing so costs a day, but the company discovers 10 points of Treasure in the form of old coins and jewels amid the many, many bones that lie there. This lake, it seems, was used as a ritual site for sacrifices by evil men who laboured under the Shadow in past ages.

- Part Five -
Approaching the Watchtower

A band of Orcs under the leadership of Haglach serves the Dragon. The Orcs came from the north-west, from the Grey Mountains, but now dwell in the caves and tunnels along a gorge that runs between the edge of the Waste and the peak of Zirakinbar, the Watchtower. In years past, the gorge caves were frozen and home to Snow-Trolls and lesser cold-worms, but the growing heat of the Dragon has thawed them out. Now, they are mud-choked pits of slime, full of secret hiding places and uncertain footing, making them a perfect lair for Orcs. Nevertheless, the gorge is the least difficult route through the hills.

While the company cannot see the Orcs at a distance, by night it's clear that the gorge is inhabited, for at sundown the Orcs light huge bonfires and chant the name of the Dragon, as if stoking his flames. Every day that the company draws nearer the pass, the chants get louder and the air grows hotter, as though they are walking into a furnace. If he is with the company, Uzghash grudgingly warns them of the Orc encampment's guards and watchers.

Orc-Sentries

Orc-Sentries watch the approaches to the Watchtower from perches on the hillsides and tors that dot the northern wastes. The lands around are still and empty, so any movement can be seen from a long distance away. Fortunately, a maze of gullies and defiles offers cover, so the companions can try to advance without being seen. Orcs have good night-vision, so there's no advantage to trying the crossing by dark – and by day, sentries in caves high on the hillside take over, staring into the sunlight until their eyes bleed.

Before crossing the maze, the company's Scout can range ahead and try to find the best route with an **Explore** test. If the roll fails, the Scout risks being spotted and must pass a **Stealth** test to hide in time.

A successful **Explore** test from the Scout gives the company one Success die that can be applied to the later **Stealth** tests (two dice on a great success, three on an extraordinary success). Crossing the maze without being noticed by the Orcs requires three successful **Stealth** rolls. Choose the companions who take these tests randomly. If any of these rolls are failed, the company is spotted.

Spotted!

If the company is spotted, there's time for a single bow-shot by the swiftest companion to bring down the Orc. The difficulty for this attack is TN 20. On a successful hit, the Orc falls. Otherwise, the alarm is raised. The company may retreat and try to hide in the Wastes, or press on. If they press on, then they're going to be *Battling The Orcs* (see below) as Orcs swarm out of holes and tunnels in the valley and close in on the travellers.

If they retreat, it costs a day and increases Dragon Awareness by +4, but they can attempt the crossing again the next day.

Once the company has reached the gorge entrance another choice lies before them. Do they take the shorter route through the Orc-infested gorge, or the longer, harder but possibly safer route through the mountains on either side?

The Mountain Route

At any time, the mountain route would be perilous. The hills that mark the border between the Waste and the Withered Heath are steep and rocky, and every route goes up sheer cliffs or over mounds of loose scree. If the company were here before, they remember the biting cold winds that howled around the slopes, or the icy rime on the rocks.

Now, though, things are even worse, for the Dragon's heat has brought an unexpected and unwelcome false spring to the region. The cliffs glisten like a poisoned blade in the dying sun, as ice turns to slippery slush and back again, and the hills slough mud in landslides like a snake shedding its skin. Fortunately, once the company reach the top of the cliffs, they can easily hide in the scrub-forests along the hills and avoid the Orcs – assuming, of course, they do reach the top of the cliffs.

Crossing via the mountain takes three days, plus another two to make it through the hills beyond to the Watchtower. The company must pass two Fatigue tests at TN 20 to cross the mountains.

Potential Hazards

The following paragraphs describe potential hazards for the mountain route (all the episodes described use special rules, and thus are not formatted in the usual way).

Landslide! (Guide)
The false spring means that the very rocks themselves are unstable. The Guide must make a **Travel** roll (TN 20) to avoid the danger, otherwise the ground begins to slip and slide beneath the company. Failure means the company is caught in the landslide, losing a Success die worth of Endurance each. Worse, the path is now blocked, costing the company a day's travel. On an one of the company is also Wounded.

The Cliff Path (Scout)
The only way forward is to climb a sheer cliff. The Scout goes first, with a rope. Climbing the cliff requires three **Athletics** tests. Each success awards the Scout ten feet of vertical progress, but a failure represents a fall at the accumulated height. For example, a failed first test is a fall of 10 feet, a failure on the second is a fall of 20 feet and a failed third test is a 30-foot fall. See page 184 of *The One Ring Roleplaying Game*. Alternatively, a day's exploration and a successful **Explore** test (TN 18) finds an alternative route.

Warg-Tracks (Hunter)
The hunter notices the traces of a Warg, and the prints suggest the beast is searching for the company. The hunter may hide the company's tracks with a **Hunting** or **Search** test; if the test fails, increase Dragon Awareness by 2.

Orc Scouts (Look-Out)
Orc scouts creep abroad by night, searching the cliffs around the gorge. The look-out gets an **Awareness** test to notice their approach and warn the rest of the company. Otherwise, the company are spotted and the scouts warns the other Orcs. Increase Dragon Awareness by 2.

Dreams of Fire (Any)
The character is troubled by dreams of being burnt to death by Dragon-fire. On waking, the character must make a Corruption test. If the roll fails, the character gains 1 Shadow point immediately, and another Shadow point whenever he or she is attacked by a Dragon's breath weapon or sees another companion perish in flames.

The Dragon Is Here! (All)
The Dragon goes hunting, looking for one of the hardy wild goats or maybe a fat Snow-Troll to eat. As it circles, though, it smells an unfamiliar scent on the air – adventurers! Raise Dragon Awareness by 2.

The Gorge Route

The gorge route is faster, but requires sneaking past a host of Orcs. There are two ways for the company to attempt this feat.

By Brightest Day

Creatures of the Enemy cannot abide sunlight – and even this far north, even with clouds of ash or snow choking the

sky, the noonday sun is too bright for the Orcs to tolerate, so they must retreat into their caves. The company could race across the valley at noon, hastening towards the Withered Heath as fast as they can. The downside, of course, is that they'll certainly be seen and pursued once the sun goes down, and then they'll be caught between the Orcs and the Dragon.

If the company choose this plan, they can cross the valley and be at Zirakinbar in two days – but they'll have the Orc-host on their heels! Raise Dragon Awareness by 6, and there's no time to spare for subtlety once they reach the Watchtower – the company's only hope is to slay the Dragon before the Orcs arrive!

By Darkest Night

Each night, the Orcs celebrate the coming doom of the north as their master's fire grows. The company can try sneaking through as the Orcs are distracted by the bonfires. This has its virtues – there's a chance that the company can get through without being seen – and its perils, in that if the company are spotted, the whole orc-host will be upon them.

To get through the gorge undetected, each companion must pass a **Stealth** test at TN 16. If one of them fails, they will have to cut their way through.

Battling the Orcs

Haglach's Orc tribe numbers more than five hundred. Virtually all of them are lesser Misty Mountains Orcs and Goblins, but they are no less dangerous for that. If the company engage with a patrol, then assume there's one Orc-Soldier and two Goblin Archers per companion, plus an Orc Guard in command. If Haglach is present, he counts as an Orc-Chieftain.

If the company are unlucky enough to take the whole tribe on, then each wave consists of two Orc-Soldiers and three Archers per companion.

A Red Day, A Sword Day, To Die on

Optionally, if Lord Elstan is with the company, he might volunteer to stand rearguard in the gorge against the Orc-host. There are narrow places where one heroic old man, wounded or no, could hold the pass against five hundred for a time.

Ambushing the Orcs

Every few days, Haglach and a few of his advisors travel north to the Watchtower to offer obeisance to the Dragon. If the company manage to sneak past the Orcs without being spotted, they can ambush Haglach and his guards. Slaying Haglach throws the Orc tribe into confusion (and allows Ukghash to take over again, if he is nearby). Furthermore, the company could take the Orc-garb and disguise themselves as Orcs, allowing them to sneak up close to the Dragon.

A Spear's Throw

As the company approach the mountain, a small dusty shape scurries out from the shadow of a boulder. It takes them a moment to recognise it as Skirfira, the young Dwarven sage they met back in Erebor, the companion of Greystroke. She runs up to meet them and explains breathlessly:

"Greystroke... she wouldn't listen... or wait. Dragon-fire... too hot... she's climbing up!" With that, Skirfira points at the side of the mountain. To the right of the road there is a sheer cliff that leads up to a cave mouth, a crack big enough for a Dragon to crawl out of (it's the mouth of the Rift, location 4 on the map below). Fumes pour from the crack, almost hiding the shape of a lone figure scaling the rocks. It's Greystroke.

- If the company don't act then a few moments later there is a flare of red light from inside the mountain, and then a terrifying roar that nearly dislodges Greystroke. The Dragon emerges from the cave.

- If it's Raenar, then he sees Greystroke and sneers. He starts to climb down the cliff towards her. She snaps at him with her spear, aiming for his eye-socket, but the Dragon twists and she hits his shoulder instead. The Dragon roars in pain so loudly the mountain shakes, and Greystroke loses her grip. Before she can fall, though, the Dragon's head snakes out, bites her, and swallows her whole.

- If it's Wruenele, then the Dragon flies out across the grey skies, heedless of the enemy behind him. He circles around the mountain, exulting in his flight. Once, twice, Greystroke raises her spear to throw it, but it's clear that she doesn't have the leverage to make the throw. On the third pass, she looks down for a moment to the valley far below, as if bidding farewell to Skirfira. Then she throws the spear, putting her full strength behind it, pushing off with her legs to give the throw added force. She falls to her death. The spear flies towards Wruenele, who lets out a blast of flame in alarm. The fires deflect the spear just enough, and it clatters to the ground beyond him.

- Either way, the Dragon retrieves the spear after a few minutes, and returns to its lair.

Saving Greystroke: Saving the hero is no easy task. The only options would be to attack or distract the Dragon as it emerges, or race up the mountainside to stop Greystroke before she gets too close and wakes the Dragon. Invoking a suitable trait (like *Swift*) is necessary in the latter case.

Recovering the Spear: Grabbing the spear before the Dragon gets to it is a little easier, although the companion must still make a **Stealth** test to avoid being seen by the Dragon. Alternatively, they can steal the spear from the treasure hoard once the Dragon brings it back up to the Watchtower.

Skirfira's Aid: If Greystroke dies, Skirfira is stricken with grief. A roll of **Inspire** (TN 16) convinces her to keep going and to mourn her friend later. Skirfira can give the company any three pieces of lore from *Secrets of Mazarbul* (page 68) or *Stories of Dragons* (page 70). Otherwise, she stumbles away south, as though blind.

If the company rescue Greystroke, then Skirfira devotes herself to tending to her wounded comrade. She offers up the above secrets freely, and advises the company to make for the secret door into the Watchtower. She offers her axe to open the secret door.

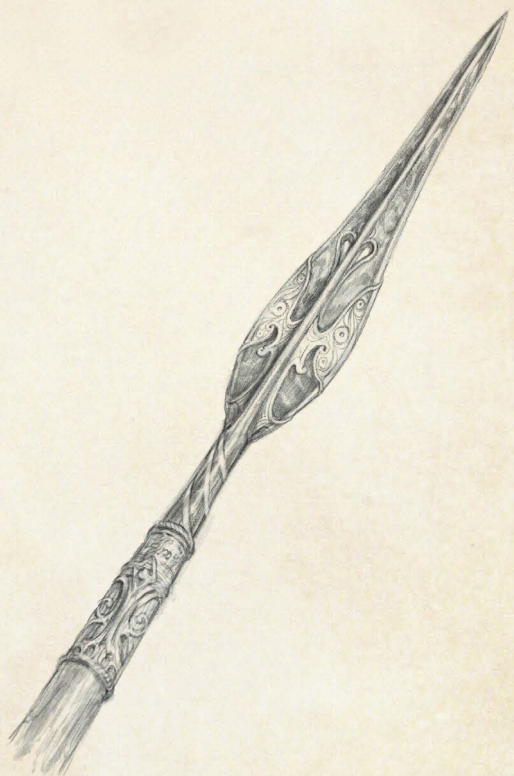
Greystroke's Aid: If Greystroke survives, she grudgingly thanks the company for their aid and will fight alongside them – her aid counts as four Success dice in the battle with the Dragon.

Nameless, The Elven Spear

Type: Spear
Craftsmanship: Elven
Banes: Dragons

Qualities:

1. **Foe-Slaying:** When attacking a Dragon, reduce this weapon's Edge by the wielder's Valour.
2. **Runes of Victory:** When you attack with this weapon, you score an automatic hit on a ᚠ and also on a 👁 result.



The Shadow of the Past

If your group played through all of *Tales from Wilderland*, what happened in your game? What was left here? Is the Chain of Thangorodrim somewhere in the wreckage? For that matter, does the foul Gibbet King lie here, poison-blasted or caught by his own sorcery? Did the Dragon Raenar perish on the slopes, or was his skull burst asunder by the Chamber of Winds?

This adventure assumes that the upper part of the Watchtower is destroyed and no sign or device of the Gibbet King remains.

– Part Six –
By Stealth and Guile

Once, the Watchtower of Zirakinbar was a wonder to behold. The hill was a hollow one, riven by many narrow clefts and tunnels, and of them the Dwarves of yore made an instrument, a harp of air and stone that could be played by opening or shutting doors and valves. They made the mountains sing.

The Dragon smashed all that. Nothing remains of the upper levels of the Watchtower now. The Chamber of Winds and Raven's Perch are both nothing but rubble. Smoke and sulphurous fumes rise from the mountain's shattered crown.

Not At Home

The Dragon's movements in this part of the adventure are determined both directly and indirectly by the actions of the player-heroes. Depending on how *A Spear's Throw* resolved, the Dragon is either snoozing on his bed of treasure, or returning after having retrieved Greystroke's spear.

If the Dragon knows the player characters are nearby, he may attack or chase them. The Dragon will not normally walk into a trap or a disadvantageous situation, but the company may be able to taunt him with an **Awe** or **Inspire** test (TN 20, -2 per Hunt Episode elapsed as the Dragon gets more and more angry)

If the Dragon merely *suspects* the presence of intruders, then continue to use the Dragon Awareness & Hunt rules.

Locations in the Tower

1. The Road: This path winds up the steep sides of the mountain to the main gate of the watchtower. It's exposed to the sky (the Dragon deliberately tore away any shelter) so anyone travelling along the road can be seen for miles.

2. Main Gate: The main entrance to Zirakinbar. The Dragon is still small enough to squeeze through the gates, although it's now a tight fit.

3. Secret Entrance: The Dragon never found this cunningly concealed secret door. To open it, one must knock three times with an axe-head.

4. Rift: This huge crack in the mountain is the Dragon's back door. If the Dragon is winged Wruenele, then he spreads his great wings to catch the cold winds howling from the north, and takes flight. If the Dragon is crawling Raenar, then he slithers down the sheer wall of the cliff like some primeval lizard, digging his claws deep into the stone as he descends.

5. Great Hall: This chamber has become the Dragon's lair. The room is unpleasantly hot and foul-smelling, with thick clouds of smoke billowing around looking for an exit. Even so large a creature as the Dragon is hard to see in here; the companions might catch glimpses of the beast, a burning eye there, a clawed foot there, a length of tail or span of wing there, but they won't see the whole Dragon unless they lure it outside.

A huge stone block hangs above the main door, suspended by a chain with a quick-release pulley. In times past, a cunning Dwarven machine controlled the raising and lowering of the block, but the Orcs replaced this with a quick-and-dirty solution. The Dragon uses this mechanism to prevent intruders from entering his lair when he is out hunting – he closes the door, then leaves through the rift.

6. Cellars: Empty and in danger of collapse.

7. Empty Chambers: Not marked on map.

8. Bed of Treasure: The Dragon long ago sniffed out the treasure kept in the secret vault, and gathered it into a bed. The hoard here contains 400 Treasure*** (if the company found the secret vault during **The Watch on the Heath**, then the new hoard is a mere 200***).

Entering the Watchtower

There are three routes into the tower.

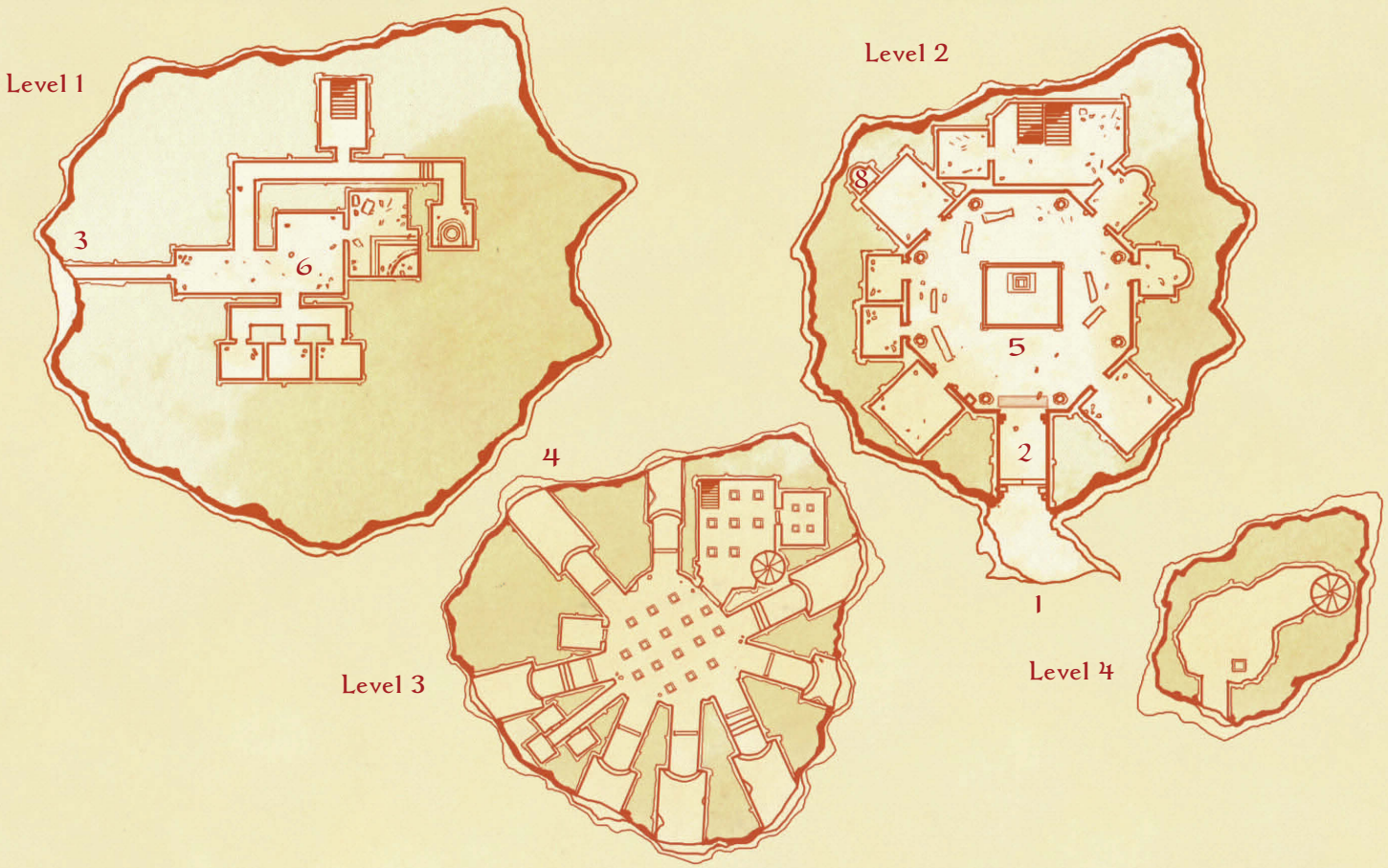
- The main door is easily accessible, but leaves no possibility for stealth. If the company go in that way, the Dragon knows they're coming.

- Climbing up the cliff wall to the rift is much more dangerous (if that is the right word, when the "safer" path leads literally right into a Dragon's den!) To climb the cliff, each adventurer must succeed at an **Athletics** test (TN 16). Failure means the character slips and falls. A kind Loremaster might permit the adventurer to land on the jagged rocks 20 or 30 feet below and become Wounded rather than slain outright.

- If the company know the secret way in, they can sneak up the road until they come to a goat-path, then circle around the peak to the secret door. The path is narrow and slippery, but can be traversed with care.

Sneaking Around

The difficulty to sneak around outside or in the lower level of the Watchtower is TN 14. Moving around the upper level is TN 16; it's TN 18 in the great hall or bed of treasure. Failing a **Stealth** test raises the Dragon Awareness by 2; if awareness crosses the Hunt Threshold, the Dragon spots the thief. If the company are in disguise, then they must make normal **Persuade** tests to deceive the Dragon when they arrive, or TN 18 tests to approach his magnificence. No test is required to boldly approach if they met Raenar in the past and parted on "good" terms. In such a case he is curious why the company has foolishly returned to his supper table...



Playing Raenar

- You are old, but your heart was cold and bitter for many of those long centuries; a skulking Cold-worm, gnawing the roots of the mountains and biding your time. Now, with Smaug gone, you are the oldest and greatest of the wyrms of the North, and your spirit is ablaze for the first time since the Elder Days.
- You know, though, that there are stronger forces in the world than you (though none as strong as you shall be, if you survive). An arrow brought down Smaug, and rumour has reached your ears that the Necromancer of Dol Guldur too has been defeated. There are many, many enemies, so you must be cautious and conserve your strength.
- Plunder and treasure is everything to you. Guard your hoard jealously. Count every coin like a miser.
- You do not laugh. You never laugh. You shall laugh only when you have burnt Erebor, and Dale, and the Greenwood, and smashed Lake-Town to splinters, and when every living thing between the Crossings of Celduin and the Fords of Anduin acknowledges you Master.

Playing Wruenele

- What a time to be a Dragon! You are young and glorious, a bright banner of flame across the skies of a grey world! You are a god, a prince of Dragons! Nothing can stop you!
- For you, play and punishment, laughter and fire are all one. Indulge yourself. Be whimsical and joyful, for nothing can harm you or stop you!
- Take special joy when others point out your magnificence.
- You are no fool, of course. You know that Smaug died when some archer struck him with an arrow, and you must admit that your diamond waistcoat is still somewhat lacking. Speed must be your watchword, then – fly faster than an arrow and hotter than a thunderbolt!

Conversations with a Dragon

Conversing with the Dragon is an excellent way to stall for time, in order to get other companions into position to battle the foe.

Set Tolerance

The hotter the Dragon's fires, the less Tolerant he is. The Dragon's Tolerance starts equal to the lowest Valour or Wisdom rating among those daring to address him, minus the number of Hunt Episodes that have elapsed. Reduce the Dragon's Tolerance by one for each Dwarf or Elf in the company and for each famous weapon.

The Dragon's minimum Tolerance is one.

Introduction

Either **Courtesy** or **Awe** works – he's going to eat you either way, of course. Alternatively, the company can jump straight into **Riddle**, but starting with it means the company won't be able to persuade the Dragon of anything during the interaction phase.

Interaction

The safest option is the Riddle-Game. If you want to use mechanics, then start with a **Riddle** test at TN 10, then TN 12, then TN 14 and so forth. The players start by posing a riddle for the Dragon to solve, and then the Dragon responds with a harder one, and then the players pose a still harder one and so on until one side fails a test.

If the companions have already exceeded the Tolerance when he fails to guess a Riddle, his frustration overcomes him and he attacks. If he still tolerates the company's presence, he grudgingly offers them a single (small) favour or a 1-point item of Treasure from his hoard.

If zero or one Hunt Episodes have occurred, the Dragon's flames are still relatively low, and he is less confident and courageous. In such a situation, he mistakes honeyed words for traps, and flattery for deceit. The difficulty for **Courtesy** is TN 18, and for **Persuade** it is TN 14.

If two or more Hunt Episodes have occurred, then the Dragon is full of fire and vigour. In such a mood, only flattery will do – the difficulty for **Courtesy** is 14, and that for **Persuade** rises to TN 20.

Persuade (or a particular loquacious roll of **Battle**) might be able to convince the Dragon to delay attacking Erebor. *"Even Smaug the Dreadful was unable to hold the Mountain, and to the strength of Erebor has been added to that of Dale and the Iron Hills. The lives of Dragons are long, oh calamitous one – wait a short few years, and then consider a foray south. Cleverness and caution, alloyed with fire and wrath, will make you greater than Smaug, greater than any Dragon in this Age of the World or the last!"* (Of course, if the company thinks that this is a solution, they are sorely mistaken. Not only shall the Dragon attack in years to come with added strength, but he may do so bolstered by the malign will and desire of the Enemy...)

Song (or a heavy meal) can lull the Dragon to sleep. A successful **Song** test means the Dragon cannot spend Hate in the first round of battle, as he shakes off his slumber.

A great success gives two rounds of grace; an extraordinary success means the Dragon cannot spend Hate for the first three rounds of battle.

Resolution

How many successes did the company accrue?

0-1. (Narrow Success): Lunchtime! The Dragon attacks immediately, with sudden fury. This counts as an Ambush.

2-3. (Success): This has been an amusing diversion. The Dragon stirs itself and prepares to attack. The company have a brief moment to flee or prepare some stratagem.

4-5. (Great Success): You are a most charming fellow. The Dragon permits the company to leave. He'll still hunt them down at his leisure, of course, but he would prefer that they bring word of his magnificence to Erebor. Let them be heralds of the destruction to come!

6+. (Extraordinary Success): Have you considered a career as a sycophant? The Dragon demands that one or more of the company stay with him as advisers (or entertainers).

Insulting the Dragon, or refusing any of his generous offers, triggers an immediate attack.

Raenar *The Plunderer*

Attribute Level	
10	
Endurance	Hate
140	12
Parry	Armour
12	7d/1d*
Skills	
Personality, 6	Survival, 3
Movement, 5	Custom, 5
Perception, 6	Vocation, 4
Weapon Skills	
Bite	5
Rend	3
Tail-lash	1
Crush	3
Special Abilities	
Dreadful Spells	Horrible Strength
Fire Breath (Special – see below)	Savage Assault
Foul Reek	Thick Hide
Great Size	Thing of Terror
Hatred (Dwarves & Elves)	*Weak Spot

Weapons:

Weapon type	Damage	Edge	Injury	Called Shot
Bite	10	8	18	-
Rend	7	9	20	Piercing
Tail-Lash	20	👁	18	Knock-down
Crush	20	👁	20	-

Wruenele *The Fiery*

Attribute Level	
9	
Endurance	Hate
90	9
Parry	Armour
4	5d/1d*
Skills	
Personality, 7	Survival, 4
Movement, 7	Custom, 3
Perception, 3	Vocation, 2
Weapon Skills	
Bite	4
Rend	3
Tail-lash	2
Crush	1
Special Abilities	
Dreadful Spells	Great Size
Fell Speed	Thing of Terror
Fire Breath	*Weak Spot

Weapons:

Weapon type	Damage	Edge	Injury	Called Shot
Bite	7	8	18	-
Rend	9	9	18	Piercing
Tail-Lash	18	👁	16	Knock-down
Crush	18	👁	18	-

- Part Seven -
Slaying The Dragon

The battle with the Dragon is going to be a complex fight, and differs in parts depending on whether the company are battling Raenar the Plunderer or Wruenele the Fiery.

First, let's enumerate the Dragon's advantages in the battle:

Fire Breath

By spending a point of Hate, the Dragon sends fire leaping from its jaws to engulf its enemies. Anyone attacking the Dragon in close combat risks being caught in the blast and losing a number of Endurance points equal to 10 plus the monster's Attribute level. Additionally, they must immediately make a Protection test or be Wounded (armour applies its benefits).

The number of targets affected by the blast, the damage they receive and the difficulty of the Protection test depend on the number of Hunt Episodes that have occurred.

Hunt Episodes	Targets	Protection TN
0-1	All in close combat*	16
2-3	All in close combat	18
4+	All nearby	20

*Heroes reduce the loss of Endurance if fighting in the following stances: -2 if in Open, -4 if in Defensive or Rearward.

Wings

Only young Wruenele can fly, giving him *Fell Speed*. He may use his Fire Breath while flying.

When making a Called Shot, a companion may target Wruenele's wings instead of attempting to Wound him. Reduce the Dragon's Armour by 2d when defending against such an attack. If the Protection test fails, the arrow slices through the delicate membranes of the Dragon's wing and the monster must land.

Dreadful Spells

Both Dragons have the power of dark sorcery.

Raenar

During combat, spend one point of Hate to force a companion who is within his baleful gaze to make a Corruption check (TN 16). If failed, the companion gains 1 Shadow Point and cannot attack the Dragon for a number of rounds equal to 10 minus his Wisdom score. The Dragon can spend several Hate points to affect an equal number of companions at the same time. If used during an encounter, companions put under the Dragon-spell feel compelled to answer questions truthfully.

Wruenele

During combat, spend one point of Hate to force a companion who is within his baleful gaze to make a Corruption check (TN 16). If failed, the companion becomes Miserable for a number of rounds equal to 10 minus his Wisdom score.

Remember, Miserable characters suffer a bout of madness if they roll a on the Feat die. In this case, a bout of madness might result in:

- Obsessive greed for the Dragon's hoard
- Irrational terror of fire
- Jealousy of the other Dragon-hunters
- The overwhelming desire to leap into the abyss below

Weak Spot

All Dragons have a Weak Spot. Whenever either Dragon attempts a called shot or spends Hate to use a special ability (*Horrible Strength, Fire Breath, Savage Assault* or *Dreadful Spells*), he exposes his Weak Spot for enough time for the companions to hit it with their next attack. When hit with a Piercing Blow on his weak spot, the Dragon rolls only one die for his Protection test.

Raenar: Raenar's belly is tough and hoary, and girded with gold and gems. His Weak Spot can only be struck by an attack in Forward stance.

Wruenele: The younger wyrm has not attained the toughness of the elder – his Weak Spot may be hit in any stance.

The Orcs

As if a Dragon were not bad enough, the company may also need to contend with the Orcs from the valley if they were unable to sneak past them. The Dragon has no regard for the lives of the Orcs, and will not hesitate to use its breath even if it also catches a few "followers" in the blast.

Tricks & Traps

Likely tactics for the company.

The Falling Block

The old Dwarf trap in the Great Hall can be used to pin the Dragon. One member of the company must lure or drive the Dragon through the gate, while another springs the trap. The falling block inflicts 40 points of damage. It cannot Wound the Dragon, but traps him in place until the Dragon succeeds at a Movement test (TN 30).

Striking From Below

The rift offers plenty of hiding places where a single spearman could conceal himself, waiting for the Dragon to pass. The Dragon's weak spot is exposed when attacking from below, even if the monster did not just spend Hate. This will only work once, as afterwards the Dragon will be exceedingly wary of attacks from beneath.

The Fatted Goat

The Dragon gets sleepy after a big meal. If the Dragon is sleepy, he cannot spend Hate until he rouses himself, which takes one or two rounds of combat.

Running the Battle

The Dragons employ different tactics.

Raenar

Raenar is cautious and protective of his hoard. He'll use his breath weapon to clear the watchtower of any intruders; only when he's sure that the mountain is empty will he close the main gate and crawl out the rift. He attacks methodically, ripping the fiercest foes to pieces before turning on less dangerous enemies.

Fighting Raenar in the close quarters of the mountain is foolish; the company need to get him outside where they can attack him with ranged weapons and avoid his fire breath.

Wruenele

Wruenele's chief advantages are agility and fierceness, not tactics. He takes to the air as soon as he can, treating the company like goats to be scorched and hunted, not foes to be respected.

To defeat Wruenele, the company need to bring him down to earth as swiftly as they can, or he'll burn them one by one with his breath weapon.

- Epilogue -

The Dragon is dead! Erebor is once again secure!

Immediately after the Dragon perishes, a fierce snow-storm blows down from the north. Is this blizzard the result of the Dragon's unnatural fires being quenched, allowing winter to reclaim its rightful place in the mountains? Or was this storm sent from the Dark Lord, his wrath made manifest as another of his plans is ruined by the adventurers?

Either way, the snow gives the company cover to escape the remaining Orcs; however, they must leave directly and they will be exceedingly hard pressed to haul away the Dragon's entire hoard and the Orcs will hunt them if they do not move at speed. The hoard, of course, rightfully belongs to King Dáin, but the King Under the Mountain will reward the adventurers as agreed from his own treasury once they return to the land they have defended. Depending on what they leave behind, Dáin may well swiftly send an armed force to quietly claim it before any rumours can spread.

Of the other would-be Dragon slayers:

- If Khuldri survives the House of Brech, he goes mad and runs into the waste to die. Some say his brother's ghost hounded him to atone for his misdeeds.

- If Elstan survives, he retires to a little cottage in Dale and puts aside his sword and shield. A suitable companion (a knight of Dale or hero who has Bard as a patron) may receive the Aegis of Dale by taking the Receive Title undertaking in Dale. If he dies, King Bard sends adventurers out to find his remains and raise a cairn over them.

- If Greystroke survives, she vanishes again – no doubt going in search of some better death than a Dragon. Her path must therefore bring her south, to the land of Gondor and the coming battle with the armies of Mordor.

- And if Skirfira survives, she has seen a Dragon at last. She returns to Erebor to write a practical manual on Dragon-slaying...

All members of the company receive an extra 3 Experience points. As few know of the Dragon's presence, the company do not suddenly become famous throughout Wilderland for their valiant deed; however, the Elves and the Wise soon know what they have done, and in their future dealings with such folk, their deeds will be acknowledged and granted respect accordingly.

- Dark Waters -

- **When:** The adventure is presented as set in the spring of 2961, but can take place at any time after 2958, with minimum adjustments.
- **Where:** The action takes place among the houses of Lake-town, and below them.
- **What:** A bronze statue of Bard is being completed for the forthcoming Dragontide celebrations. Orsmid, the craftsman responsible for the statue, has gone missing. The companions are asked to find him by Orsmid's apprentice, a young woman named Magan.
- **Why:** The companions are among the people that saw the craftsman before the disappearance. Magan knows of their deeds, and she is confident they will be able to find Orsmid.
- **Who:** Orsmid, master smith and sculptor; Orsmid's apprentice, Magan, and Odvarr, former friend to Orsmid and head of the new Guild of Artisans in Lake-town. Linnon, an ambitious and greedy Raft-elf, and finally, the Guttermaw.

Adventuring Phase

The adventure is divided into seven parts.

Part One - At the Sign of the Pike and Eel

A large rainstorm forces the company to take refuge at an inn along Bridge Street. While at the inn, the companions hear rumours of a monstrous creature seen swimming in the River Running, as well as plans for this year's Dragontide festival. Toasts are made to celebrate the life and success of Orsmid, who is in attendance. Later that same night, Orsmid encounters Odvarr, a former friend, and falls into the waters of the Lake.

Part Two - The Apprentice

Two days later, the companions are called to a meeting at Orsmid's workshop, where they meet Magan. She asks them to find Orsmid, who never returned home after the party.

Part Three - Tales, Secrets and Lies

The search begins at *The Pike and Eel*, the inn from the night of the rainstorm. There, the company hears witnesses describe a late night argument between Orsmid and another man. They soon learn that this man matches the description of Odvarr, the head of the Guild of Artisans.

Part Four - The Guild of Artisans

The company meets with Odvarr, the leader of the Guild. Truth and deception mix in this meeting and it is likely that both Odvarr and the companions will urgently seek what exactly happened to Orsmid on the night of the storm.

Part Five - Elf-stones and Dwarven Gold

The heroes must navigate the dangerous political waters of Lake-town as they negotiate with the emissary of the Wood-elves in order to speak with the Dwarven gem-cutters of the Glittering Gate. With success, they learn that more than an old metalworker is missing.

Part Six - Whispers in the Dark

A stranger has a lead on the missing smith but following up on it means that the company will have to venture into parts of Lake-town where few dare to venture. Before they can rescue Orsmid, the heroes are caught!

Part Seven - Flotsam and Jetsam

The companions must break free in order to save Orsmid and the Mornamir. But then the Guttermaw comes...

Epilogue - The Past is Never That

Where both Orsmid and Odvarr (if he still lives) must face the consequences of their recent and not so recent actions.

Past Lives

Odvarr the guild-master and Orsmid the sculptor are two respectable citizens of Lake-town, but they were very different when they were young. Born from poor families, the two met on the streets of Lake-town when they were still teenage boys. At the time, they were hoping to become

rich by stealthily reducing the load of many a merchant boat; trade back then was not as prosperous as it is today, but the two got lucky at times, and came to enjoy their life as petty thieves.

One summer, a boat came to Lake-town from the distant south, carrying precious fabrics and gems to sell to the Elvenking. On a night without a moon, Odvarr and Orsmid climbed its side, and silently crawled below deck. There, among crates and bales of cloth, the burglars experienced a sight they would never forget: dozens of glittering jewels lying wrapped in silk and velvet, a hoard worthy of a Dragon, and in the middle of them, the Mornamir, a large gem cut like a drop of black crystal, sitting in a crystal casket!

Orsmid and Odvarr were completely spellbound by the sight of the wondrous gem, and almost didn't hear the peal of bells sounding the alarm: In a panic, Odvarr fled, a handful of white gems in his pockets. A sailor took a swing to his face with a blazing torch as he emerged on the deck, but he managed to jump into the lake and swim away. Left alone in the hold of the boat, Orsmid sat still in the dark, listening to the steps of the seamen running after Odvarr and unable to wrestle his eyes from the Mornamir. Then, his hands trembling, Orsmid opened the crystal casket, took the gem and ran.

He doesn't remember exactly what happened next: Orsmid woke up soaking wet in the hold of a fisherman's boat moored among the timbers of Lake-town, with a red-feathered arrow sticking from his side and the weight of the precious stone in his pouch.

Shortly after this near catastrophe, Orsmid and Odvarr parted ways, both considering their thieving days to be over. Orsmid became an apprentice to a smith and never said anything about the Mornamir to anyone, while Odvarr used his ill-gotten wealth cunningly, slowly building a good position as a merchant. Many years passed, without them ever speaking again of what they saw that night.

Many Years Later

The death of Smaug dramatically changed the lives of Orsmid and Odvarr. The smith distinguished himself fighting in the Battle of Five Armies and was engaged by King Bard in the rebuilding of Lake-town and Dale, acquiring a reputation as one of the finest craftsmen of the region. On his part, Odvarr found himself in the perfect position to profit from the growing importance of Lake-town as a trading port and became one of the wealthiest traders in the city, dealing mainly with the selling of the wares produced by the many artisans of Lake-town; after long years of political manoeuvrings and manipulations, Odvarr has succeeded in gaining the trust of the majority of craftsmen of the city and was recently elected deacon of the newly-formed Guild of Artisans.

But the past is never fully buried. When Orsmid presented to the public the wondrous black gem he was going to use as the head of the Black Arrow on his statue of Bard the Bowman, Odvarr recognised the Mornamir and finally knew what really happened in that darkened hold below deck, so many years ago, both shame for fleeing and jealousy of the jewel stirred hatred in his heart for his former friend.

- Part One -
At the Sign of the Pike and Eel

The adventure begins in the spring of the year, while the company is in Lake-town. The spring of 2961 has been a very wet one, with Lake-town's citizens waking up most mornings to the sound of the falling rain, and bedding down at night to the low rumble of thunder echoing across the surface of the Long Lake.

The Statue

It is early evening when the companions find themselves in the Market square of Lake-town. They have come to have a look at the bronze statue being erected for the forthcoming twentieth annual Dragontide celebrations (if the adventure is set in 2961). The monument, to be officially uncovered on the Day of the Black Arrow (first of November), will be a 20-foot tall figure of Bard drawing his great bow and has been sponsored by the town's Guild of Artisans.

What can be seen for the moment is that the impressive statue has been cast and assembled on a stone platform, but its features are rough and incomplete, as the artist has yet to start the lengthy stages of chasing and polishing its metal surface. The details of the face are vague, and the

arrow is conspicuously missing its arrowhead. Companions who have been in Lake-town the previous month know that Orsmid, the sculptor working on the statue, publicly announced that the Black Arrow will be topped by a marvellous black gem, the like of which has never been seen since the recovery of the hoard of the Dragon.

As the companions exchange their considerations about the work of art they came to admire, a sudden, heavy downpour sweeps the town, forcing them to take refuge in *The Pike and Eel*, an inn situated at the end of Bridge Street, just before the Market square. It is not long before many folk, locals and travellers alike, find themselves packed into the crowded quarters of the common room.

Clouds and Storms

The rain and thunderstorms of the season provide atmosphere in this adventure. The themes of misdirection and hidden intentions can be strongly reinforced with visual cues from the Loremaster. Lank damp hair beneath sodden hoods, puddle-filled streets, and swollen waterways should feature prominently, and a near constant drizzle of rain should fall from a grey and turbulent sky.

It is Safer Indoors

The Pike and Eel is a small inn that is especially popular with fishermen and fishmongers. It is owned by Nefgeir, a stern but well-meaning man with a reputation for serving the best beer outside of Erebor. The common room of the inn is not only a comfortable place to weather the storm and get some hot fish soup in one's belly, but a fine spot to share stories and take comfort in the renewed fellowship of the Free Folk of the North.

The Loremaster should present this opening episode as a free-form roleplaying scene, an opportunity for the player-heroes to have a bit of fun without the weight and responsibility of great deeds laid out before them. The aim of this part of the adventure is to seed information about forthcoming events, but the Loremaster can also use it to plant their own adventure hooks, see familiar faces or introduce important Loremaster characters of their own creation.

The following paragraphs describe the main characters involved in the current story. The information provided represents how the various characters behave and present themselves to the companions (it does not include details a character wishes to remain secret).

Orsmid, Metalworker

Sitting by the table closest to the fire and drinking alone is Orsmid, a man that doesn't seem to belong to the usual crowd of merchants and fishermen. He is a smith and a sculptor, working with all kinds of metals, currently tasked by the town council with the creation of the bronze statue of Bard the Bowman. A wiry, dark grey beard covers a face which is missing a few teeth, while deep crags on his face and hands betray Orsmid's true age: the master smith has spent almost seven decades upon Middle-earth.

Orsmid, like Nefgeir, has witnessed the destruction that Smaug brought to the old city. The sculptor and the innkeeper seem to appreciate one another's company in that way that old men who have shared a hardship are wont to do.

Despite being born in Lake-town and claiming to be a full-blooded native of Esgaroth, Orsmid counts himself among King Bard's staunchest supporters and he speaks about the Bowman in a manner more befitting a young man talking about his hero. He fought by Bard's side as a spearman at the Battle of Five Armies: he bears a nasty scar to show for it, a puckered pale ridge striking across his chest, a gift from a Great Bat.

Orsmid is a humble fellow and though he graciously thanks well-wishers and admirers of his work, he spends most of the evening slowly sipping at his ale and smiling warmly at the younger patrons celebrating around him. Not a man who is prone to talking, a companion might get him to open up a bit with a successful roll of **Song** or talk of his **Craft**. He might speak of how pleased he is to be able to devote his talent to the legacy of Lake-town before he's "too old to be of much use," and then grin broadly. If asked about the black gem to serve as the Black Arrow's head, Orsmid says only that he is honoured to contribute to the lasting glory of Bard with his own personal treasure.

Magan, Apprentice to Orsmid

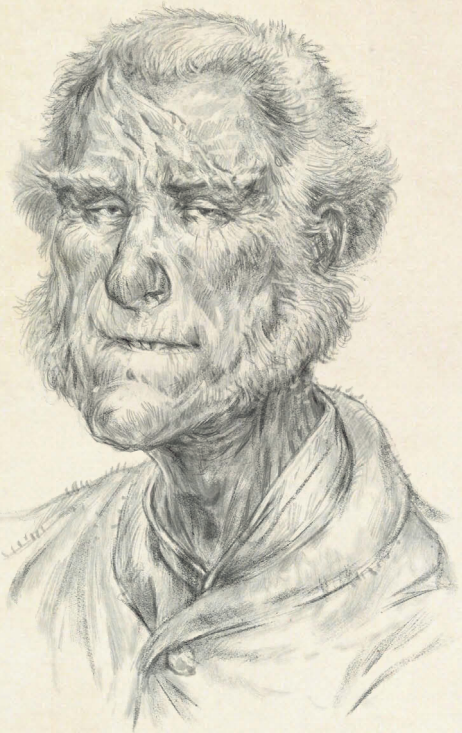
At some point during the evening, a tall young woman enters the inn and approaches Orsmid with a concerned look in her eyes. They seem to know each other very well, and after a brief exchange, Orsmid dismisses her with a nod and a paternal smile. If the companions are talking to Orsmid when the woman arrives, they are introduced briefly to Magan, Orsmid's apprentice. She came just to recommend her master not to stay up all night, as he will need his strength for the following morning's work. When Orsmid agrees to her recommendation, she leaves.

Nefgeir, the Innkeeper

The innkeeper has seen good times and bad over the course of his 60 years. His hair and prodigious sideburns

have long since gone grey, and his voice is like the sound of stone breaking. Nefgeir was once an accomplished fisherman, a career that left him with a great store of patience, a useful virtue in his line of work. After the destruction of the old Esgaroth, Nefgeir abandoned his former trade and opened the inn.

The innkeeper views the running of *The Pike* with great severity, as many suppliers and customers have learned to their cost. This notwithstanding, he is welcoming to strangers and a kind word and a bit of **Courtesy** go a long way with him.



Holti, Antique Dealer

A middle-aged merchant visiting from Dale, where he owns a curiosity shop. He is a man always on the lookout for a deal, or continually making things out to be more valuable than they are. With an unflinching smile and disturbingly nice teeth, Holti is in Lake-town to determine if there is coin to be made by hauling some of his 'valuables' here for the anniversary celebrations. He wears a ridiculous hat which sprouts two brightly coloured feathers.

If approached, Holti makes comments on the reports about the Dwarven gem-cutters of the Glittering Gate experiencing a peculiar absence of precious stones and an associated rise in price, something he finds odd. **Persuade** or the *Trading* trait should be used while speaking with Holti.

Haldis

A fisherwoman, Haldis is young and bright-eyed, her clothes always smelling faintly of fish. She wears a small golden fish hook tucked into her hat as a lucky charm. Unlike many of her lake-going peers, Haldis fishes in the waters below Lake-town itself. Smaller quarry to be sure, and considered unwholesome by other fishermen, who in truth ignore how Haldis manages to catch the fish that darts among the timbers of the city.

Haldis is held by other patrons to be very quiet, more quiet than it is considered normal, to say the truth. And when Haldis talks most can't make head or tails of what she says. But she is harmless and good-natured, and everyone loves her. If approached with the right word (a roll of **Courtesy** or an appropriate trait), Haldis shares a number of sinister stories about town children who have gone missing. According to her, they were devoured by the 'guttermaw', a creature escaped from the deepest recesses of the Lonely Mountain and now swimming in the waters of the Long Lake.

Eutaric of Woodland Hall

Called "Shepherd" by his friends, Eutaric is a Woodman of Mirkwood, in Lake-town to visit the family of his wife Aefre. Small by the standards of men, with a short brown beard and shaggy hair, he bears a finely crafted bow that is worn with years of use. Eutaric is quick with a jest and free with his coin when buying drinks and will respond favourably to **Courtesy** or to *True-hearted* individuals. He is always eager to hear tales from throughout Wilderland.

Despite his friendly demeanour, a successful **Awareness** or **Insight** roll suggests that Eutaric is intently searching the crowd for someone (in truth, he is hunting for an old enemy and the trip to visit his wife's family is but an excuse to seek out his quarry. He will not speak of it, unless befriended by a fellow Woodman).

Aefre

Aefre, wife to Eutaric, is a Barding. She is the daughter of Arn, the chieftain of a family of herders from the Upper Marches. Some years ago, Eutaric was passing through the lands to the east of Dale and managed to impress Arn over the course of a summer. Finding himself with a thinning herd and ever more mouths to feed, Arn was quick to send Aefre off to marry Eutaric, whom he judged honorable and dependable. Though initially an arrangement, their bond grew into a loving one and Aefre now oversees the affairs of their home in Woodland Hall. She is gentle but firm, and is very skilled at resolving the small disputes that can arise amongst folk on a farmstead.

Aefre is capable of seeing through simple deceptions, and can often tell the heart of a person with a glance. She is short with a sweet nature and a crooked smile. She responds favourably to **Courtesy**, and will immediately take a liking to any companion who seems to know their way around animals.

Later into the Night

Well before midnight, some of the storm's intensity fades, but there is still a persistently heavy rainfall. There is space available at the inn if the company chooses to stay there. A character with a Prosperous or Rich Standard of Living may get a bed for the night while others may stay in the common room. Companions with other lodgings who insist on returning there can make it, but will arrive home soaking wet.

- For the purpose of this adventure, it is important that the companions pay no particular attention to Orsmid the metalworker leaving the tavern some time after midnight. If they didn't befriend him it is easy to just avoid mentioning him leaving at all. If one or more companions pay close attention to what he is doing, just have him find an excuse to leave on his own, maybe even taking offense if someone offers to accompany him or to follow him.

Sometime before sunrise, the rain lets up to a light drizzle. If the companions are still at the inn, the smell of simmering broth and baking bread coming from the kitchen is enough to wake up even the latest of late risers. Many of the other occupants have left before the dawn to return to their daily responsibilities, though perhaps with an aching head to accompany them.

If the companions have other tasks to occupy them in Lake-town, let them get to it. Two days later they will be summoned to Orsmid's workshop.

- Part Two -
The Apprentice

Orsmid works in one of the largest buildings of the Artisans' District of Lake-town. The high-ceilinged warehouse serves the craftsman well, as he needs a workshop that can house the large furnace and heavy tools he uses for the casting of the separate pieces of his larger bronze statuary. A smaller forge is used for the working of other metals, as Orsmid occasionally serves also as a blacksmith and coppersmith, making iron tools and copper wares, like weather-vanes, plates and pots. The smith works and lives in his workshop, sharing the place with his apprentice, Magan.

Magan has not seen or heard from Orsmid since the night of the storm, now two nights ago. Beginning to fear the worst, and not wishing to create gossip, Magan turns to the company for help. She saw them at *The Pike and Inn*, possibly talking to her master, and she has additionally heard tales of their recent accomplishments (such as their saving her aunt Kelda in **The Silver Needle**). Magan hires a street urchin to bring them a simple message from her:

"Your assistance is requested in a delicate matter related to the planning of this year's Dragontide celebrations."

The Young Disciple

Magan meets the company at Orsmid's workshop. Tools and materials cover every corner of a space clearly used primarily for work, together with several wax models and clay prototypes for the statue of Bard. Magan receives her guests in her workwear, her pale hair cut shorter than is fashionable and tied back with a bit of leather scrap.

Set Tolerance

Her time spent as Orsmid's student has taught Magan to look beyond the surface of both her work and people: the basic Tolerance for the encounter is based on the highest Wisdom in the party. Add 1 to the rating for each Dwarf present.

Introduction

Using **Awe** to introduce themselves to Magan will serve the company well (TN 12). She is actually deeply worried that something terrible has happened to her master, and a company that seems confident and capable will quell some of that fear.

Interaction

Magan begins with earnestness, but as the conversation progresses, her voice takes on a more familiar tone as her emotional investment starts to win through:

"For six years I have served as an apprentice to Orsmid, whose home you are now standing in. His is a rare and precious trade, and I am honoured to be his disciple and heir. He is not a young man, and he intends to have me take over his workshop when he finally decides to retire, but he seems to maintain a bottomless vitality that I do not begrudge him. You may have heard, he has been tasked by the Guild of Artisans to sculpt the statue of King Bard that you have seen in the square.

Now, my master has gone missing. Two nights ago he left the workshop to go at The Pike and Eel, *as is his custom after a hard day of work. Two days without as much as a word or note is not like him at all, and he would never vanish while working on such a prestigious task! That is why I fear for his safety.*

Would you help me find my master? Word of your deeds has reached us, even here in our workshop, and I hope that you may prove able to locate him."

What do the Companions know about that Night?

The companions were at *The Pike* the night Orsmid disappeared, so it is entirely natural that they will attempt to draw some conclusions based on what they witnessed there. Each Loremaster must answer the question individually, as it is impossible to predetermine what the companions did while at the inn. Did they befriend any of the patrons that night? Did they sleep at the inn or leave early? Did they see Orsmid leaving?

The companions will probably have several questions to pose to Magan, to get a better picture of Orsmid as a man, and to know what clues there may be about his disappearance. The Loremaster should use any part of the following dialogue to answer the company's questions.

"Orsmid has no family to speak of. He lost everything in the destruction of the old Lake-town, and he helped in the building of the new. But I don't know much, as he doesn't talk about his past. I had always assumed that his family died in the fires."

"Though he is friendly to all that he meets, I don't think he has any in his life that he is particularly close to, other than myself, or the innkeeper at The Pike on Bridge street. I can't help but think there is some past tragedy that I am not aware of that keeps him so solitary."

"His commission for the statue was handled through the new town Guild of Artisans. Orsmid was initially surprised when they chose him to complete this great work, but was excited and honoured."

"Orsmid took me in six summers ago. I was born in Dale, my mother was sickly throughout much of my childhood and I largely raised myself. I have always been big for my age, and strong, and as a youngster I was fascinated by the superior skill of the Dwarven smiths of my hometown. I had dreamed of being taken as an apprentice to one of them, but I had no one to pay for it."

"I was losing all hope when Orsmid caught me stealing bread in the Market Square of Dale. He was there to buy ore and charcoal and took more pity on me than he should have. I have been living with him ever since. I owe him everything."

"I don't believe Orsmid has any enemies. I can't imagine anyone wanting to do the old man harm. His customers are satisfied, and recently he is enjoying a measure of fame since the construction of the statue has started. I suppose it's possible that some may be jealous of his success, but I can't imagine who that might be."

If asked about the black gem that Orsmid intended to use as the head of the Black Arrow, Magan answers with some reluctance.

"It is my master's greatest treasure. A great black jewel, as wide as my open hand and tapering at one end. I do not know from whence it came, he only told me that he received it long ago, and had never found a purpose for it before being given this job. He allowed me to look upon it but once before the presentation. I have no idea if the jewel is missing; I don't know where he keeps it."

Resolution

If the company agrees to search for Orsmid, compare the number of successes rolled during the Encounter with the results below. Having offered up what information and reward she might, Magan returns to her work. She can be found here in the following days.

0-1. (Narrow Success): Magan is desperate. She worries that time is not on her side, and that her master may be lying injured somewhere. She doesn't think much of the adventurers, so once they've left, she will ask Odvarr at the Guild of Artisans for help. Add 1 to the Tolerance of the Encounter in *Part Four: The Guild of Artisans*.

2-4. (Success): Magan's immediate panic is soothed, though she is still fearful. If they can return Orsmid safely, she offers the companions 2 points of Treasure apiece, taken from her own meagre earnings as an apprentice (she is unaware how little that is likely to be from the company's perspective).

Magan's Help

The exact nature of this help can take many forms and will be determined by individual groups. If using the rules for Holdings (*The Darkening of Mirkwood* pg. 8) perhaps Magan can make or repair metal wares, or reinforce doors or window frames, potentially decreasing the Holding's rating by 1 point.

Alternately, Magan is adventurous enough to help in many instances where metalworking might be helpful, such as Restoring the Old Forest Road (*The Darkening of Mirkwood* pg. 30) or other such Fellowship phase endeavours.

5-6. (Great Success): Results as 2-4 above, but the company has also raised Magan's spirits somewhat. If Orsmid lives, she now believes the companions may be able to find him. Magan offers additional reward in the form of professional assistance sometime in the future.

7+. (Extraordinary Success): Magan's heart has been rekindled with renewed hope. In addition to the previous two results, should the companions prove successful, she invites them to be official guests of herself and Orsmid at the ceremony for the completion of the statue. (See notes in the **Epilogue** on page 117).

- Part Three - Tales, Secrets and Lies

This part of the adventure assumes that the companions start investigating the disappearance of Orsmid, and that they return to *The Pike and Eel* to talk to folk they may have met there.

The Guttermaw

Everyone in Lake-town has heard something about the water serpent haunting the waters of the Long-lake, even though no one has seen it. Some say it's the cursed spawn of Smaug returned to avenge the Dragon, others laugh at the nonsense and say it must be a marsh drake, arrived from the East following a trading boat. Those believing themselves the wisest say it's only a monstrous eel or a gigantic catfish.

For the length of the investigation, Loremasters are encouraged to come up with their own fantastical details about the 'guttermaw' and to weave them into the testimonies of those the companions interrogate in their search for Orsmid. The blame for any wrong should be put on the creature, from accidental deaths to the fever of a child - by the end of the adventure, the companions should have heard enough about it to be entirely sure it's just a rumour.

Back at the Inn

The Pike and Eel offers a different sight during the day: the windows are open, and the daylight chases away the shadows from the darkest corners. The innkeeper is there, naturally, and a handful of regular patrons sit at the tables, generally eating rather than drinking. Haldis, the fisherwoman, is conspicuously missing from the patrons the companions encountered that night.

Nefgeir

The innkeeper is found at the inn during most hours of the day, as it is both his home and livelihood. If the company befriended Nefgeir previously, or if they're staying at the inn, he greets them with a smile and makes offers of food or drink (the difficulty is lowered to TN 12 for all interaction rolls.)

Rolls of **Courtesy** will reveal that Orsmid left the Inn just after midnight, while it was still raining fairly heavily. While Nefgeir doesn't have much to add to the investigation at hand, having him as a friend may pay off in other ways, for example, maybe the company can use the inn as a base for the investigation.

Nefgeir the Witness

If the Loremaster finds it convenient, or if the players need some help in figuring out what's going on, an additional detail can be added to Nefgeir's backstory. If this option is chosen, then Nefgeir is the fisherman that many years ago recovered a wounded Orsmid from the waters of the lake. Orsmid knows he owns his life to Nefgeir, as he recognised the boat in which he awoke, but the two never talked about what really happened that night. This secret is the shared experience that forged their friendship.

Aefre and Eutaric

The company may also track down Aefre relatively easily. She and her husband are staying at the inn over the next few days, and while Eutaric is gone in the daytime, Aefre awaits a visit from her father, so can be found in the common room or out about the Market square.

Aefre can provide a very valuable lead for the company: well after midnight on the night of the storm, Orsmid took his leave of the inn, but did not make it very far.

"I thought it peculiar that the old man was leaving so late, and in such weather. Still, he seemed in a cheerful mood and the wine had only brightened his eyes. When he left I stepped out after him to watch the rain for a while. It was then that I saw Orsmid over by the Market-pool and he was not alone. There, standing in the rain, he and another man were having an argument!

I thought at first to get Eutaric to break up a tussle if need be, but something about the way the men spoke to one another suggested to me that they were old acquaintances. I suddenly found myself feeling a bit foolish for spying on two old men! I went back inside and it wasn't long before I retired for the night."

If asked to describe the other man, Aefre can provide some details.

"I didn't get too close a look at him, though he seemed to be of an age with Orsmid. But I can tell you this, his face seemed to bear a horrible disfigurement on one side, as though burned by Dragon-fire."

If asked about the whereabouts of her husband, she informs the companions that he is visiting old friends in the city and purchasing supplies for their journey home.

If the companions return to ask Nefgeir about the burned man and give a description, he will easily identify the man as Odvarr, the head of Lake-town's Guild of Artisans. The guild is a new association, created a few years ago for the mutual assistance of all the craftsmen of the city, following the example set by the powerful Guild of Merchants.

Holti

Holti is also staying at *The Pike*, and can be found perusing the Market square throughout the day. Drifting from stall to stall, he is an easy fellow to spot (those feathers!) as he looks for deals to make or people to swindle.

Holti didn't have much interaction with Orsmid at the inn as the old man didn't have much patience for Holti's slippery language or merchant's ways. He moved onto easier targets, but only after having a brief conversation with Orsmid about the quality of the inn's beer. If asked about a black jewel however, a successful **Persuade** roll causes Holti's eyes light up and with a conspiratorial tone he suggests that the companions head to the Glittering Gate in the Elven quarter to inquire there about stolen jewels...

"You cannot trust any Dwarf with an honest deal when it's gold or precious stones, but it's one thing to make a good profit, another to steal outright! I have heard that the city's current shortage of quality jewellery wasn't a plan of our mountain neighbours, but should rather be investigated among the subjects of the Woodland ruler..."

Holti cannot provide any proof to substantiate the rumour; he can only add that it makes sense to him, as it seems that the 'quality jewellery' that is currently missing from the market refers especially to those white or green precious stones that are called 'Elf-stones' around here.

Is Eutaric the Villain?

Some players may latch onto Eutaric as a potential suspect in the disappearance, given his behaviour at the Inn. If the Loremaster wishes, tracking down Eutaric can provide a perfectly fruitless red herring for the companions to chase after. In truth, he is spending his days searching for a man that killed his younger brother many years ago, though he is not yet sure what he will do if he finds him! He is a careful and thoughtful sort, used to spiriting between the trees in the Western Eaves of Mirkwood, but coming so close to resolving this chapter of his life has made him reckless. If the players follow this hunch, Eutaric can be found, though it will require six successes on a prolonged Search test and occupy an entire day's time. He can currently be found in the vicinity of the Gatehouse.

- Part Four -
The Guild of Artisans

If the heroes have identified the man who was arguing with Orsmid the night of his disappearance, at some point they will head toward the house of the Guild of Artisans to speak to Odvarr.

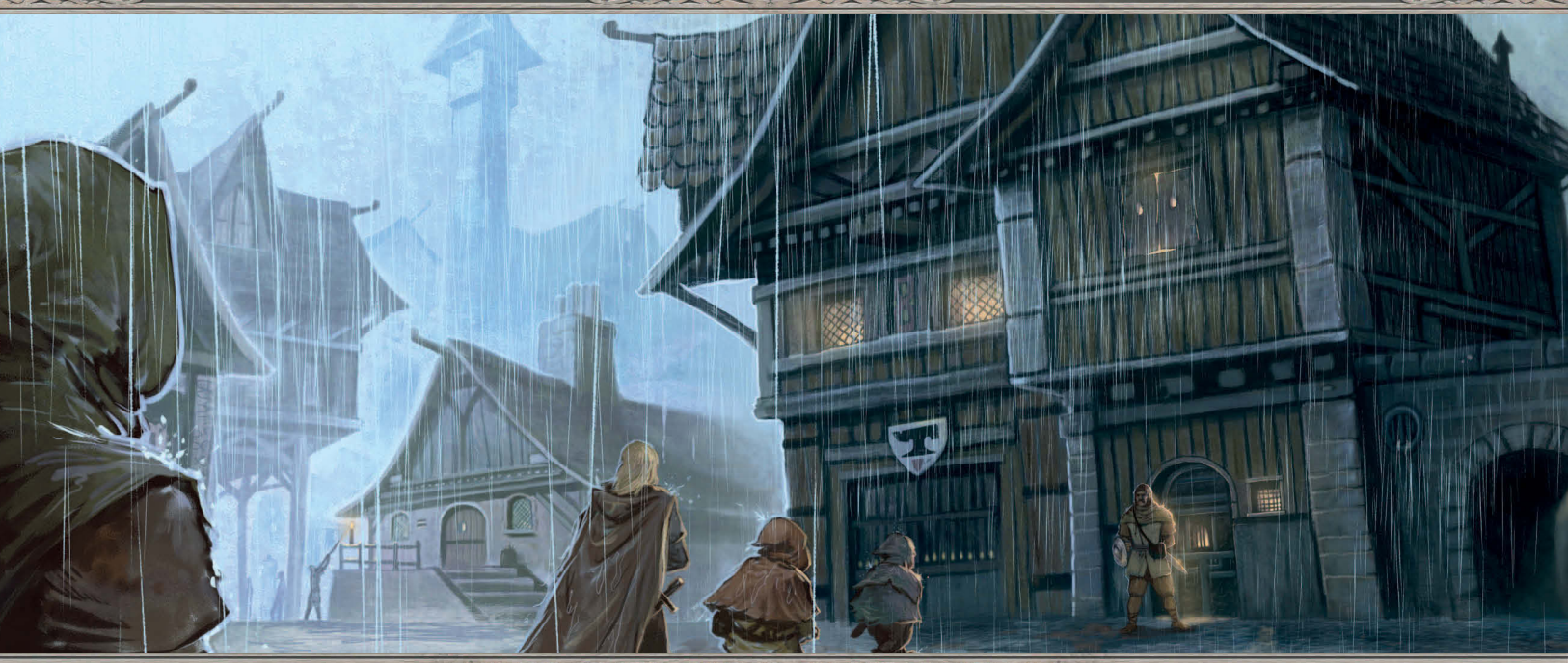
The Guild of Artisans of Lake-town was formed five years ago, to protect the business interests of the many craftsmen of the city, as many had come to believe that without organisation they would be overshadowed by the Guild of Merchant's interests as far as the decisions of the city council are concerned (the council is composed mainly of retired traders).

Their meeting hall is a small two-storey building facing a small square along the street of bowyers and fletchers; the members of the association call it their 'guild house' (and not a 'guild hall') out of deference for the more powerful Guild of Merchants.

During the day, the house serves as a meeting place for the members of the guild to trade with suppliers of tools and materials, or to secure commissions. In the evening, guild members gather in a smaller room at the back of the building, the guild tavern, to drink beer as they discuss the events of the day. The private office of the guild deacon, Odvarr, is on the second floor, as is the room where the board of officers meet.

Entering the Guild House

A single guard is stationed at the wooden door of the guild house. The guard carries a buckler and a short sword and looks perfectly comfortable standing out in the rain; with a scowl and a flinty look in his eyes it seems as though he has spent most of his life doing just that.



The guard stops all visitors at the door, and asks to know their business with the guild. The Guild-house is members only, except by appointment, he explains. If the companions mention Orsmid, the statue or suggest that they are investigating a crime, after a brief disappearance inside, the guard returns to escort them inside and up a short flight of stairs. As the companions enter the building, the rain comes down heavier.

At the top of the stairs is the office of the guild deacon. Inside is a room dominated by an imposing wooden desk covered in heavily bound ledgers, stacks of parchment, and an iron bound chest. The man behind the desk is no less magisterial, with an embroidered waistcoat of bright colours covering his expansive midsection.

Odvarr seems a man that likes everything in its place, down to the last hair on his head, despite the burn-scarred flesh that covers the right half of his face.

With a nod he dismisses the guard and lights a pipe before gesturing for the companions to take a seat. When he speaks, his scars require him to talk out of the left side of his mouth, giving him a bit of a smirk that is sometimes reflected in the twinkle in his eyes.

A Dark Conscience

Odvarr believes that he let Orsmid drown, after he saw him fall into the waters of the lake. He was certain that there weren't any witnesses, but now that the companions are here asking about Orsmid, he starts worrying that they might discover something. He is ready to deny any involvement, and will resort to putting the blame on the legendary Guttermaw if the companions leave him no other possibility.

The outcome of the Encounter with him will determine how much of a threat Odvarr believes the companions to be.

Set Tolerance

Odvarr has not ascended to this position by being blind to the motivations of other men. The base Tolerance is based on the highest Wisdom among the companions. Reduce the Tolerance by 2 if the companions were explicit about their search for Orsmid, as Odvarr is wary of the companions' intentions.

Introduction

Odvarr is used to dealing with silver-tongued merchants and wealthy landowners, so the companions should introduce themselves with **Courtesy**. It will also prove to Odvarr that the player-heroes are smart enough to know how to approach a man like himself, so they're probably smart enough to cause him trouble. As the players are very likely looking to Odvarr as a possible suspect, **Riddle** is the skill that should be used for most interactions.

Interaction

The companions are either here to question Odvarr about the argument with Orsmid, or to simply follow up on the knowledge that the Guild of Artisans helped arrange Orsmid's commission for the statue. Some likely questions and Odvarr's answers are listed below. The Loremaster should use the information provided as a guide, keeping in mind that Odvarr believes he isn't really responsible for his former friend's death, as he didn't push him into the water. He is both sly and shrewd, and almost every response is a carefully crafted mixture of truths and lies.

- Was the Guild responsible for Orsmid's commission for the statue?

  "I take great pride in saying yes, the Guild of Artisans was instrumental in arranging for Orsmid to be the lead artisan on that grand work. While I am certain our friends the Dwarves would have done an excellent job with stone, the guild felt that it was only fitting

that one of King Bard's subjects should be the one doing the work. And none better than Orsmid, who has served our fine city for so many years."

- Was there a great deal of money at stake?

  "You understand that while I cannot divulge the exact terms of the commission, it is the Guild's hope that Orsmid will complete the statue, and in so doing earn enough coin and prestige that he will be able to finally lay down his chisels and get some well-deserved rest in retirement."

- Were you at *The Pike and Eel* two nights ago?

  "I wasn't. I sometimes visit for a late glass of mulled wine, but not that night. I passed by the Market square on my way home, but didn't think about stopping at the inn."

- Someone saw you arguing with Orsmid. Are you and Orsmid old acquaintances? (At this question Odvarr pauses, surprised that there were witnesses to the event. But he is quick enough to answer with a falsehood).

  "It was a personal matter. There are some wounds that take a very long time to heal, try as we might. Orsmid and I are old friends, it is true. We have known each other for 25 years now."

- If pressed about the argument, or confronted about seeming nervous or dishonest, Odvarr recovers quickly and with a sigh, feigns a reveal of the truth.

  "The heart of the matter is this: many years ago, there was a woman. Her name was Eofara, and I loved her more than the Dwarves love their Mountain. But her heart belonged to Orsmid. It was... an unpleasant affair. My friendship with Orsmid never recovered. If my regrets were put to paper they would outnumber these ledgers surrounding us. Please do not ask me to speak more of it."

- Did you know that Orsmid is missing?

  "Missing? It's true that I have not seen or spoken to Orsmid since that night. But missing? This is foul news."

- What do you know about Orsmid's black jewel? Do you know that it is also missing? (More than any other, this topic of conversation puts Odvarr on edge, as it was his desire for the black gem that prevented him from rescuing Orsmid. In an effort to hide his uneasiness, and to find what the companions know of the whereabouts of the jewel, he says what he really knows of the stone, taking the chance to cast Orsmid under a negative light).

  "Orsmid's black jewel? That it and Orsmid are missing... these are dark tidings indeed, though not entirely unexpected..."

  Here he takes a deep breath, as if releasing himself from some burden:

  "My friends, I very much doubt that the jewel belonged to Orsmid... When he revealed it to the public, I recognised it from some studies that I made when I was younger. It was called the Mornamir by the Elves, though I don't know for certain where it came from. A local legend says it came from the East, and that it was lost when treacherous Men tried to lure the Elvenking into a trap and kill him. I do not presume to know how he came to possess it, but I am certain that it was not in Orsmid's right to keep it."

Evaluating the Outcome of the Encounter

If Tolerance is exceeded, Odvarr will end the conversation, citing a guild meeting that he must attend. If the jewel and the disappearance of Orsmid came up during the encounter, Odvarr insists he must make preparations to replace Orsmid as the artisan responsible for the statue's completion, and with little time to waste.

Once the companions leave, Odvarr becomes bent on finding the jewel, hoping that Orsmid didn't have it on himself when he fell in the water. Odvarr calls in many favours among the craftpeople of the city in an effort to locate the gem.

The total number of successes the party rolled during the Encounter will determine his next course of action.

1. (Narrow Success): Odvarr is not impressed with the companions and does not believe them to be any serious

threat to him. He will instruct his contacts throughout the city to keep their ears open just in case. The company will suspect that Odvarr is hiding something, though they won't know what.

2-4. (Success): Odvarr is concerned about the involvement of the companions. He believes that given enough time they may somehow connect Orsmid's death back to him. To protect himself he will divert the companions' suspicions to Orsmid's drunkenness, and the legendary Guttermaw, providing at least one witness of the creature's presence under the waters of the lake. The company will get the distinct impression that Odvarr means them ill, though he would hotly deny it confronted, dismissing it as "stress" or some other excuse.

5-6. (Great Success): Odvarr is seriously worried. He especially fears that the companions may find the Mornamir before he does. He takes all the precautions described above, additionally starting to pay for information in gold. Eventually, someone will direct him to the fisherwoman Haldis, and Odvarr will learn how she witnessed an old man being pulled from the water in the Elven Quarter two nights ago. See *Old Enemies* on page 113.

7+. (Extraordinary Success): The companions get all the information described above. Moreover, they notice that Odvarr was clearly upset by something the company said, but he is enough of a dissembler that he hid exactly what it was that concerned him. The company definitely leave with the impression that Odvarr is not trustworthy and that they need to be cautious.

What Really Happened?

Later on the same night when the companions were still inside at *The Pike and Eel* (or after they went home), Odvarr confronted Orsmid in the streets of Lake-town, asking him about the black gem. The discussion quickly escalated into an argument, and the over-excited (and quite drunk) Orsmid took a literal false step and fell from the street into the Long Lake, under the cold stare of Odvarr who stood there, watching him disappear under the dark waters.

What Now?

The earlier driving rain has given way to a cold mist that obscures Lake-town, hiding the many alleyways of Esgaroth and making navigation difficult. Hopefully the companions have started to have some ideas about the fate of Orsmid and the jewel. Companions from Lake-town fearing that the Mornamir could have been stolen know that there is only one place where gems are dealt with by merchants, and that is the Glittering Gate, in the Elven quarter.

- Part Five -
Elf-stones and Dwarven Gold

Even in times of pleasant weather the Elven quarter is not necessarily a hospitable place. Occupying the entire southwestern corner of the town, the district is separated from the rest of the city by a canal, and access to it can be gained only by boat or crossing one of its three bridges. When the companions arrive, the rain has softened to a fine cool mist, but dark clouds threaten on the horizon and as the day wears on, thunder continually grumbles a warning.

A Cold Welcome

A trio of cloaked Wood-elves appear out of the rainy mist to stop the companions as they enter the Elven quarter. Soundless and seemingly untouched by the rain, they carry weapons and wear armour under their cloaks (see the stats for Silvan Elf Sentinels, below).

The way they address the company varies on whether there are Elves in the group or not: if there are any Elves, the guards start speaking in Elvish, asking about the group's intentions, their tone courteous but firm. If there are no Elves, the guards speak in the Common tongue and request the companions to leave any weapons in their custody. They ask kindly at first, but are ready to resort to more persuasive ways if provoked.

A companion wishing to impress them with their heroic repute can attempt a roll of **Awe**: a success sees the guards relent from their request and take a step back, while a failure sees the offending companion driven from the Elven quarter at spear-point.

The Emissary

If the companions are left free to roam the Elven quarter to carry on their investigation, they eventually bump into Celebril, the emissary of the Woodland Realm currently handling all the Elvenking's business in Lake-town (see the stats for Silvan Elf Emissaries, below).

Celebril is not an old Elf by the reckoning of her folk, but she has seen the birth and disappearance of many a realm of Men in her lifetime, so she has little or no patience for a trifling matter such as the disappearance of a single individual. This means that she tries to dismiss the companions as quickly as possible, making sure that they are allowed to stay in the Elven quarter for only a short time.

The companions must pass a severe **Persuade** test (TN 18, Celebril is *Impatient*) to convince Celebril to allow them to continue: on a success, the companions are allowed to stay until midday (if they arrived in the morning) or until sundown (if they arrived in the afternoon); on a failure, they must depart immediately (see *The Power of the Elvenking*).

If at any moment during their interaction with Celebril the companions mention the Mornamir (or 'a large, black gem'), the emissary shows no noticeable reaction. The Elven diplomat isn't lying - she knows nothing about the gem - but she suspects she knows who might be involved in the affair: Linnon, the rebellious Elf who Celebril knows has been hiding in Lake-town for some time (see *The Mud-men*, page 112) - Celebril has no interest in defending Linnon, but she will let him know that someone might be looking for him.

If the players look no further, or are ordered to leave the Elven quarter, their investigation there comes to a dead end.

The Power of the Elvenking

If the player heroes try to remind Celebril that the city is ruled by the Master of Esgaroth and not by the Elvenking, they are treated as if they failed the Persuade test, and an angry letter is immediately hand-delivered to the Master of Lake-town, requesting that the companions be punished, or at least fined, for obstructing the work of an official emissary of the Woodland Realm: as a consequence, any companion with a Standing or a Valour rating of 3 or less is summoned by the Master to the Town-hall, where they receive a public reprimand costing them a point of Standing.

Silvan Elf Sentinel

Attribute Level: 6
Specialties: —
Distinctive Features: Steadfast, Keen-eyed
Relevant Skills: Athletics ♦♦, Bow ♦♦♦, Spear ♦♦
Endurance: 18

Silvan Elf Emissary

Attribute Level: 6
Specialties: Elven-lore
Distinctive Features: Cunning, Secretive, Suspicious
Relevant Skills: Courtesy ♦♦♦, Insight ♦♦

The Glittering Gate

The Glittering Gate is the group of small houses huddled in the westernmost side of the Elven quarter. Painted in bright geometric patterns, they are the workshops of the Dwarven goldsmith and gem-cutters of Lake-town. This

is the only place where the trading of gems and gold is allowed by the Master of Esgaroth, and thus where many treasures and precious items change hands and ownership.

Where normally this part of the city is enlivened at any hour of the day by the sounds of dozens of small hammers and chisels, and by the continuous murmuring of the Dwarf-smiths and their customers (mostly Elves), today a more sombre silence reigns, broken only by the incessant drumming of the rain on the low roofs.

The Guardian

Before they can take a guess at the reason for such tranquillity, the companions are hailed from across the street by a stout Dwarf, a guard wearing a heavy coat of mail and a steel helm concealing most of his face, but not his flowing red beard. This is Gylfi, son of Gisli, keeper of the Glittering Gate. Gylfi is used to dealing daily with haughty merchants and their wives, or with supercilious Elves, and sees the encounter with the companions as a welcome change of pace: he is a former adventurer, and is able to recognise their ilk at a glance.

After their experience with the Elven sentinels, the companions will probably welcome meeting someone like Gylfi. Forthright and talkative, the Dwarf is not only genuinely friendly, but he also possesses some potentially useful information.

If informed of the disappearance of Orsmid, Gylfi is saddened, as he knew the old craftsman from his business visits to the Elven quarter. Unfortunately, he doesn't know of any enemies that the smith might have made.

If the subject of precious stones is raised, Gylfi will confirm that a rumour shared by all the jewelsmiths of the Glittering Gate tells of an alarming number of episodes of burglary in the last three months, all concerning gems. Many conjectures have been made, and more curses have been uttered by every Dwarf in Lake-town, but to no avail: the precious stones seem to have disappeared.

Several letters of grievance have been delivered to the Master of Esgaroth, and word has it that the Dwarves of the Glittering Gate are a hair away from invoking the intervention of the King Under the Mountain himself. But several Dwarves counsel for patience instead, fearing that the Wood Elves might be involved - after all, who loves gems and precious stones more than the Elvenking?

- Part Six -
Whispers in the Dark

At some point during the adventure the companions will want to talk to Haldis, the fisherwoman. The companions can find her only after a few days into the investigation, on a quay along the Market-pool, mending fishing nets.

Meeting Haldis

Haldis hasn't any important information to share about Orsmid or the Mornamir but she can instead tell them all she knows about the 'guttermaw' and the 'mud-men' that roam the underside of the city, if the companions are interested. Provided they don't think this is only crazy talk, the companions may find that missing piece of the puzzle that will allow them to solve the situation...

The 'Guttermaw'

Haldis tells a version of the legend darker than the colourful renditions that the companions may have heard about the creature so far. According to the fisherwoman, the monster lurks in the dark waters below the city, feeding on fish and waste, but climbs along the timbers with its powerful short legs when hunger prompts it to search for larger prey. She has never seen it, but she has seen the

scratches left by its talons on the timbers, and she has felt its presence under the surface of the lake.

The 'Mud-men'

If the companions show an interest on this matter, Haldis explains that those she calls the 'mud-men' are a gang of thieves roaming the same environment she herself favours: the underside of Lake-town, the watery maze created by the thousands of timbers rising from the surface of the Long Lake. She has given them this name because she has noticed that they mask their countenance smearing mud across their face and eyes.

Haldis has been observing these 'mud-men' for the last couple of days, moving about the underside of Lake-town. She thinks they are thieves because who else would hide under the town? Considering their movements, they must have built a refuge somewhere under the Town-hall's quarter, where the wealthiest houses rest on the tallest timbers.

If the companions are determined to find these 'mud-men', Haldis leads them to the Butcher's Quay, where they can use a long ladder to climb down from the 'surface' of the city and into the underside of Lake-town. Then, the fisherwoman wishes the company good luck with their search, and leaves them to their dark business.

Lake-town Down Under

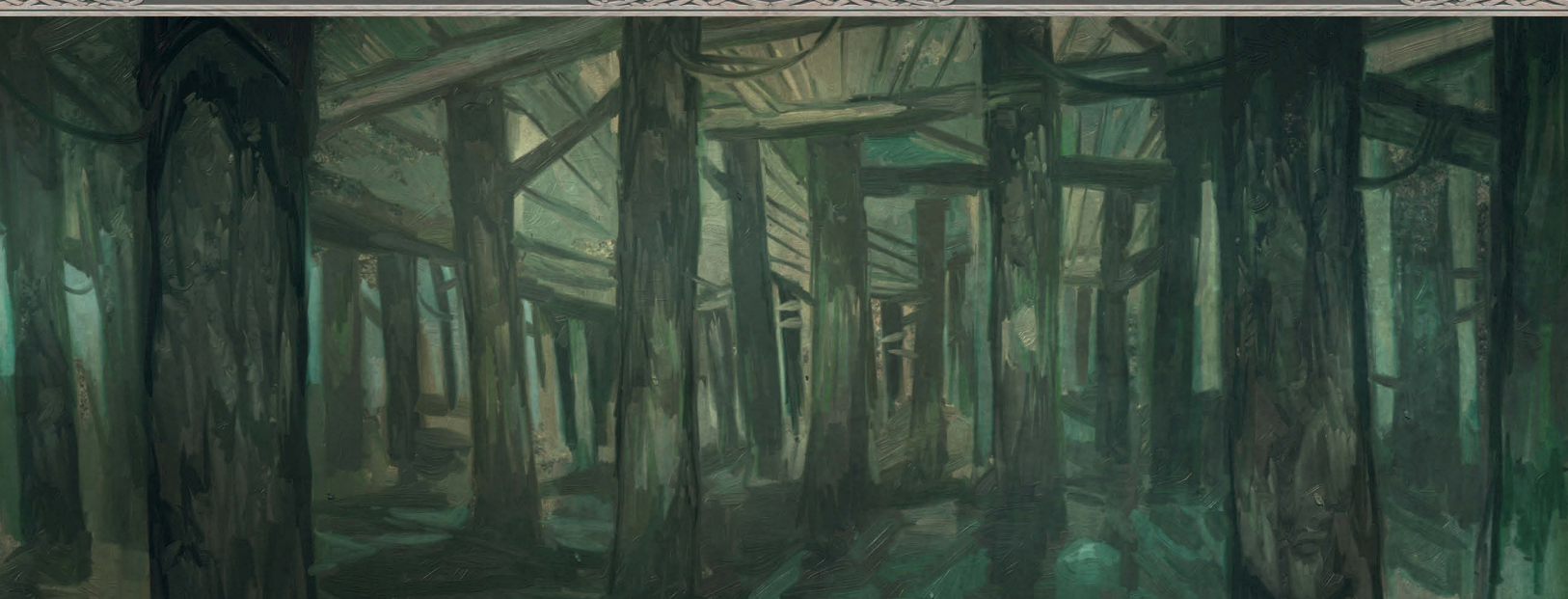
The ladder leads the company to a platform of wooden boards. From here, a path made of planks nailed to the stoutest timbers enters the dark forest that rises from the waters under the Town-hall quarter. Hundreds of wide stilts emerge from the surface of the lake, made the colour of ink by the everlasting darkness that reigns here.

The maze of twisting ways the companions are following was originally created for the maintenance of the city's underside, and enlarged secretly by thieves and burglars for their own nefarious purposes. Spiders and bugs crawl along the wet surfaces, and a smell of fish and rotten things permeates the air.

Lair of the Mud-men

After some time walking in the dark the companions see a flickering light, an oil lantern hanging from a hook driven into a stout timber. The sources of light multiply as they get closer, until the companions can make out what seems to be the reconstruction of an encampment atop the trees of Mirkwood: wooden platforms lie suspended between the stilts sustaining the buildings above, and upon them camp several warriors, clad in the colours of autumn. They are silently sharing a small casket of wine they must have stolen from the Market-pool, and several heaps of loot lie scattered about. The companions can sense many more warriors lurking at the edge of the firelight.

The companions may be surprised to see that the burglarious 'mud-men' are in fact Wood-elves, squatting on flets hanging from the timbers of Lake-town as if they were in the dark depths of their Woodland Realm, but an explanation for their behaviour can be found in the



presence of one individual: This is Linnon, their chief. He is tall and fair of countenance, but a strange light glows in his gaze, made sinister by the mud-smears on his cheeks and under his eyes.

There are seemingly two paths in front of the player-heroes: they can reveal themselves to the 'mud-men' and request an audience with their chief, hoping that there is truth to the saying that all Elves are 'Good People', or they may try to sneak around, hoping to find something that will help them puzzle this situation out.

- **Sneaking Around.** The 'mud-men' do not expect an intrusion in their darkened refuge, but it is easy to make noise when walking on wooden planks. The companions must pass a number of *severe* **Stealth** tests (TN 18) or be heard by the Wood-elves. Scouting the whole encampment requires a total of 3 tests - if the player heroes make it, they find the cage where the 'mud-men' are keeping Orsmid (see 114).

- **Confronting Linnon.** To meet the chief of the 'mud-men' the companions need only reveal themselves. When they do, the Elves react coolly, slowly standing up one by one, leaving bows and spears close to hand among the flets. Then Linnon welcomes them and invites them to join him in his camp.

Linnon, the Renegade

Linnon is a renegade Elf. He once belonged to the Wayward Elves, those of the Fair Folk who choose to enjoy life in Middle-earth to its fullest, while it lasts (see *The Heart of the Wild*, page 78). But he eventually found their lifestyle too soft for his adventurous tastes and, according to his version, he 'left'.

In truth, Linnon was expelled from the Woodland Realm when he murdered a group of trespassing Bardings, in an effort to convince his fellows that the weakness of Mortals is to blame for the Long Defeat that the Elves are suffering in their struggle against the Enemy. Since that day, Linnon has lived outside the Woodland Realm, recently moving to the underside of Lake-town to initiate his most recent endeavour: to reclaim all the gems and precious stones that once belonged to his kind and that are being traded by greedy Men and Dwarves at the Glittering Gate. Linnon and his followers are responsible for the disappearance of a great deal of precious gems from the houses and storerooms of many a merchant in Lake-town.

Old Enemies

If the players followed Eutaric during Part 3: Tales, Secrets and Lies and the Loremaster feels the need to wrap up that subplot without further complications, perhaps Linnon is in fact the murderer of Eutaric's brother, and Eutaric can show up if needed to help the companions escape in Part 7: Flotsam and Jetsam. Alternatively, if the company roused him to deep suspicion, it may be Odvarr that shows up, having followed the same clues that the companions did. In this case, he only wants the location of the Mornamir from his old friend. See Black Treachery on page 115.

Set Tolerance

Linnon has been expelled from the Woodland Realm for his violent means: the only thing he values is brute force. Tolerance is based on the highest Valour in the company, minus 3 points (to a minimum of 1) as Linnon sees everyone, Elves, Men or Dwarves, as enemies.

Introduction

Linnon demands to know who the companions are and what they are doing here in "his" dark domain. He behaves

like a King ruling over his own petty kingdom, so **Courtesy** is the best approach during introductions.

Interaction

Linnon knows the party's presence must have something to do with the Black Jewel. He knows that Orsmid *used* to possess the gem, and that the heroes seek it. Ultimately, the jewel is all that Linnon cares about, and he is growing restless with the thought that it might somehow fall into the hands of someone other than himself. He will reveal that Orsmid is his prisoner and is willing to talk about the conditions of the old man's release. Though possessed of a keen wit, Linnon is ruthless but, from the point of view of a mortal, quite mad. He will occasionally slip into a bit of a riddle game during the conversation and expect the characters to keep up with him. Rolls of **Riddle** or **Persuade** are required for the heroes to barter with him, against a severe difficulty (TN 18) due to his archaic speech.

Evaluating the Outcome of the Encounter

Use the number of successes earned in the encounter to determine Linnon's judgement.

0-4. (Narrow Success): Linnon is frustrated with the lack of answers coming from the company. He declares the companions guilty of trespassing. They are disarmed and escorted by many men and put into hanging cages,near to the cage occupied by Orsmid.

5-6. (Success): Linnon only desires the jewel. If they think to offer it, Linnon agrees to release Orsmid to the company if they can recover the gem and return it to him. They are imprisoned as above to confer with Orsmid before being later set loose to recover the gem.

7+. (Great Success): As **5-6**, but the companions may substitute any gem worth at least 50 Treasure for the Black Jewel to leave with Orsmid and far less trouble.

Orsmid

Linnon's men brought a half-drowned Orsmid to him a few days ago. By chance, Linnon discovered who the old man was, and kept him as a prisoner to get hold of the Mornamir. After the meeting with Linnon, the companions will likely find themselves in cages next to that occupied by the old man. The cages hang from a flet built at one of the highest points of the under-town, but they still graze the dark water of the lake. The only light comes from lanterns hanging on the timbers above. If the heroes stay here for long, they soon realise that the water is rising as the storm intensifies around them.

Left here to rot, Orsmid is by now a frail and wet shadow of the man he was but a few days ago. A fall, a swim in the river, and rough treatment by the Elves have left him aching and weak. He is disheartened and his courage is failing. When the companions explain who they are and why they have come, Orsmid describes his version of events, including his personal history if necessary.

"I fully expect to die in this place. There will be no peace for me. All I have attempted to build will come to naught but rust. At least these fiends will not lay their hands upon the Mornamir."

What's more, he confides in them that he had the Black Jewel on his person when he fell into the river and later brought to this place! As he was being taken into these tunnels, he was able to briefly escape and hide the jewel away in a side passage.

Players should be made to roll **Inspire** in an attempt to rouse Orsmid out of this dark reverie. The roll is *easy* (TN 12) if they have managed to give him something to drink or eat. Once they have successfully roused the old man, he will agree to guide them to the jewel, especially if they think to mention Magan's dependence on his recovery.

- Part Seven -
Flotsam and Jetsam

A cage may be enough to hold an old man, but an accomplished group of heroes should have little trouble escaping. Each hero can attempt to open the lock of the cage with a **Craft** roll; the difficulty is hard (TN 16) to do it without alerting the Elf-guard at the top. Once free however, the hero must contend with the guard, despite not having any weapons! (See Brawling Attacks, pg. 175 of *The One Ring Roleplaying Game*). If the heroes can overcome the guard, they can claim the lantern and find the company's weapons in another nearby flet.

Mud-man

Attribute Level	
3	
Endurance	Hate
12	2
Parry	Armour
3	1d
Skills	
Personality, 1	Survival, 2
Movement, 3	Custom, 1
Perception, 2	Vocation, 2
Weapon Skills	
Dagger	2
Bow	3
Spear	1
Special Abilities	
Strange Venoms*	-

** On a successful strike, the Mud-man can spend a point of Hate to force a Protection test. If the victim fails, they become Poisoned for an hour. While Poisoned, they always roll two Feat dice and take the worst one.*

Weapons:

Weapon type	Damage	Edge	Injury	Called Shot
Dagger	3		12	Poison*

Black Treachery

If Odvarr has followed the company to the under-town, he creeps into the flet and knifes the Elf guard in the back. Then he cuts the ropes for any cages holding player-heroes, causing them to fall into the churning water below. He spares only Orsmid and forces the smith to lead him to the hiding place of the Black Jewel.

Escaping the Cages Underwater

If a companion has not yet escaped from the cage, they take 5 Endurance points each round that they are in the water. But the fall and the roaring water makes breaking the cage open easier... it requires only a regular roll of Athletics or Craft to get free and then the hero can swim to the nearby surface.

Recovering the Mornamir

Once the heroes have escaped (or if they've been let out as part of an agreement to turn the Black Jewel over to Linnon) they must follow Orsmid to the side passage where he concealed his prize.

Unfortunately, the last few hours have seen the rainstorm above reach the peak of its strength, and waves are striking the stilts of Lake-town in a relentless fury. The heroes must navigate their way against strong blowing winds, always risking a fall into the raging waters. Companions must succeed at an **Explore** test or become Weary for the remainder of the adventure. If they failed to raise Orsmid's spirits in the pit, the Loremaster may opt to make them Miserable instead.

Once Orsmid gets them to the spot he was looking for, matters only get worse. Alas for the companions, certain rumours in Lake-town have their basis in truth...

The Monster

The 'guttermaw' is no legend, but some bygone breed of serpent left to breed deep beneath the earth where rivers are born. An ancient creature with a long, serpentine body, and a massive head with small eyes near the end of its pointed snout, it is a fearsome monster, whose strange

senses have perceived the presence of an unusual treasure in the Mornamir. The 'guttermaw' has long feasted in the cold waters deep beneath the Long lake, for many years feeding only on fish and such prey as it could catch along the lake's edge. With the rebuilding of Lake-town, though, it began feeding upon the wayward miscreants of the city.

Just as the hero in the passage is grasping the jewel, the Guttermaw strikes. The fish-like monster leaps out of the water snapping at the companions with its powerful jaws. The Loremaster should consider the heroes *severely hindered* during the course of the combat.

The Guttermaw

Attribute Level	
5	
Endurance	Hate
32	6
Parry	Armour
4	2d
Skills	
Personality, 1	Survival, 2
Movement, 3	Custom, 0
Perception, 3	Vocation, 1
Weapon Skills	
Iron Claws	3
Special Abilities	
Fell Speed	Seize Victim*

***Seize Victim** – If the Guttermaw successfully seizes a victim, they automatically begin drowning, as per the rules on page 184 of* The One Ring Roleplaying Game. *Seized victims begin losing 5 Endurance points every round until they can break free of the thing's grasp by successfully making an **Athletics** test against TN 15 (TN 19 for being* severely hindered).

Weapons:

Weapon Type	Damage	Edge	Injury	Called Shot
Hooked Jaws	6	2	15	-

The Mornamir

The "Black Jewel" that so many people seek is an oblong gem about 6 inches long with many facets running tip to tip. One end is sharply pointed. It is an unusual dark silvery grey colour, and if one stares into its depths, it flickers with a pale fire. Crafted by the Elves in an earlier age of the world, the exact nature and history of the Mornamir is left for the Loremaster to decide. It may carry a curse of some kind, but it is certainly not tainted by Shadow; quite the contrary. If a character thinks to wield the jewel as a weapon, it should be treated as a dagger with an Edge of 10 and an Injury of 14. When it strikes a creature of Shadow, a bright flash shines forth like a star.

If the characters have reached an agreement with Linnon to turn over the Black Jewel, then the following sections need to be adjusted accordingly. The statue will never truly be complete as intended if Linnon ends up with the jewel.

The Flight Up to Lake-town

Once they have recovered the Black Jewel, the heroes will likely need to get back to Lake-town as quickly as possible. The piercing screams of the monster will have alerted the Silvan Elves to the company's escape, and they will soon be on their heels.

In order to have any chance at all, the heroes must first find their way out of the dark passageways. One or more of the characters must make an Orientation Test (*The One Ring Roleplaying Game*, page 146) to find their way out to the surface. A failure should result in a confrontation with a few Mud-men. An results in the company being cornered in a dead end passage by far too many Mud-men to fight. Their only escape option could be to dive into the lake and swim among the raging waves.

When the company makes it back above, they find the streets of Lake-town taking a pounding from rain, along with the crashing thunder and lightning of a powerful storm.

– Epilogue –
The Past is Never That

The next morning sees the Town Watch arrive to investigate the previous night's violence. How they react will largely depend on the heroes' behaviour throughout the adventure, along with the company's reputation, and the current status of Odvarr and Orsmid. The Master of Esgaroth will undoubtedly get involved and the characters will have to make their case one way or another. Do they reveal the existence of Elven robbers beneath Lake-town? The crafty Mud-men might hide elsewhere if the Town Watch starts patrolling the under-town. Will they accuse the master of the Guild of Artisans of trying to murder them? Odvarr can easily find someone willing to say that he was at the guild house all night. Do they reveal the provenance of the Black Jewel if they know it? Orsmid might admit the theft, especially if it seems that it will calm things down.

What about Linnon? And there's a matter of a hoard of stolen gems somewhere beneath the Town-hall quarter waiting to be recovered. The Elves have a long memory, and it might be necessary to appease Celebril or pay restitution before the Mornamir can adorn the statue of Bard. These topics can provide opportunity for the Loremaster to create additional adventures.

The Completion of the Statue

One way or another, at the end of the summer, the statue of Bard is finished. It has been many lifetimes of Men since the North has seen such a work completed and the hearts of the citizens are brightened by it. If the companions are present at the dedication ceremony, they may restore 1 point of Hope. If they are there as official companions to Orsmid and Magan, they may instead restore 3 points of Hope. Note that the statue will count as completed only **if** the Mornamir is attached to it.

- Shadows - in the North

- **When:** This adventure occurs early in 2962, in the last days of winter.
- **Where:** The company begins in Dale, answering a summons from Balin. But desperate need will send them to the Netherwood, back to Dale and eventually to the heart of Erebor.
- **What:** The characters are asked to investigate dangers gathering outside the city but then find more enemies within the walls of Dale.
- **Why:** Morlach, the Sorcerer of Forod has long manipulated the leaders of Dale and Erebor, hoping for strife and war between the allies. But subtle means have failed. Now he will begin the assault directly, by attacking the heart of the Mountain.
- **Who:** Many of the company's foes and allies will play a part in this adventure, each revealing their true colours before the end.

Adventuring Phase

This adventure is divided into seven parts, from the company meeting with Balin to the Ringwraith's attack on Erebor.

Part One - Expected Visitors

The company meets Balin again and learns of a threat to both Dale and Erebor. Observant companions may realise that Gandalf has taken notice of these activities as well.

Part Two - The Vale of Bones

Deep within the Netherwood, a foe lies in wait. But the company may find themselves hard pressed to bring news of this evil back to Dale.

Part Three - A Warm Welcome

Once they have returned to Dale, the company finds that they — and Balin — are under arrest on false charges. Proving their own innocence is difficult and the King will pass judgement.

Part Four - The City of Bells

The companions must go into hiding within Dale. They will now need every friend that they have made in the course of their adventures to prevent disaster!

Part Five - Inside Information

A meeting will be held in the depths of Erebor that will determine the fate of the North for many years to come. The companions must be present, no matter if the entire Mountain stands in their way!

Part Six - The Concert of Kings

King Bard and King Dáin meet and the decisions made here will echo across the land. But they are not alone... friend and foe have come to the Mountain and the assault by the Nazgûl begins.

Part Seven - Flight into the Mountain

The Arkenstone is in danger, and the company has one final chance to defeat the Sorcerer of Forod and ruin the Ringwraith's plans.

Epilogue

Hopefully, the Arkenstone has been saved and the peace between the Mountain and the City renewed. Otherwise, dark days await the North.

- Part One - Expected Visitors

Balin has sent word to the company that he needs to speak with them on an urgent matter. He may send a raven to find them, or use one of the marvellous mechanical birds of his young friend Thrun. It is best that the companions are reminded of Thrun, for he will soon play a part in this tale.

Balin's House

Spring has not quite yet come to the city. It is a week or two away, and the town is in the melancholy grip of winter still. In the evening glow, the streets of Dale look especially

sickly. The happiness of Dragontide and celebration of the anniversary and the raising of the statue seem already a fading and hollow memory. No one has seen King Bard in public in long weeks. Stray dogs pick through midden heaps on the street corners. The brightly-coloured paving in the main streets is lifting in places. In other streets, sections of once brightly-coloured cobblestones appear to have been entirely taken away. Who knows to what end?

The Dwarf ambassador is not immune to the changing mood in Dale. He has taken to moving his quarters on a regular basis, and currently he resides in a tiny house between two boarded-up shops in the Quays.

Balin opens his small green door and blinks his tired eyes as the golden light of the waning sun falls on his face. *"Here finally? Come in! Come in! Quickly now..."* He ushers the heroes into his small quarters, but he is not without courtesy. If the companions introduce any new members to him, he will bow low to the newcomers, stating *"Balin, son of Fundin, at your service"*. He trusts that the company has chosen wisely but will likely speak foremost to those he has met before.

If asked about his change in abode the Dwarf will gruffly say he has a restless heart, and cannot settle in one place too long after years wandering. The truth is (and something of his frame of mind can be revealed with a successful **Insight** roll) he deems staying in one place too long to be dangerous in the current climate of unrest. His work in attempting to keep the peace between the cities has gained him even more enemies.

The Mark of the Wandering Wizard

A hero that is *Keen-eyed* or *Suspicious* (or perhaps a *Small* Hobbit) might chance to notice a strange mark scratched into the paint at the bottom of Balin's door. It is a ᚠ rune, the mark of Gandalf.

If the companions point out the mark on his door, Balin's grim mood will be temporarily lightened. However, the Wizard is not present and Balin will state that *"In the meantime, we must do what we can."*

Balin's home consists of two small rooms, with very little in the way of creature comforts. He offers his bed and a couple of plain wooden chairs to the company to be seated, while he brings some small mugs of beer for everyone to drink. He looks distracted, muttering to himself while he gathers mugs. He seems to have developed the habit of touching his belt with his right hand every few minutes, as if reaching for his sword. He speaks:

"Well now, no sense in beating about the bush, and I fear the hour grows late. I am now certain that there is evil at work in the city of Dale, and worse in the city of Erebor."

Balin sits with a sigh and continues:

"Yes. I am afraid that our misfortunes of the last few years are not due the natural waxing and waning in the friendship of kings. Nor do I believe that there is simply some power struggle for the throne of Dale going on. Something darker is afoot, and I can finally prove it."

"I have sent word to my old friend the Wizard Gandalf. If any will be able to help us now it is he. But I have not heard back from him yet, and I fear my messages will go unanswered. He is a wanderer and often cannot be found when he is most needed."

When asked about the "proofs" he is certain to have uncovered, Balin adds:

"I am sure you know that not all the Orcs we fought at the Battle of Five Armies were slain. Many of that craven lot fled the field to hide in secret holds in the mountains, or were scattered east, in the wilderness far from Dale. This never troubled us much - Goblins and their ilk are a fact of life, and while we slay them wherever we can, I fear we will never be entirely rid of them."

"But recently word has come to Erebor of a great army, massing near to our eastern borders with the intent to strike. The Orc army seems to be hiding in the forest known as the Netherwood, to the south of the Iron Hills, to deceive us about their number. Many scouts have found sign of their passing, converging on this spot."

"I have attempted to alert the notables of Dale to this alarming news, but to no avail. Indeed Lord Hakon seems careless of the threat, and I have been unable to reach King Bard himself. He spends many long hours alone in his chambers now, and Jofur will not spare any men. King Dáin seems equally untroubled, and leans too heavily on the wisdom of simply closing our gates."

"As for our current defences, I deem that we are weak now. I fear that we are in no state to repel an assault, should this Orc host reveal itself to be more than a phantom of fear. And so I need to ask you a favour, and it will risk life and limb."

"Go east and spy out the enemy's encampment. Do what you can to interfere with any assembling of Goblins, though I fear you may find more than just Orcs out there. Here is a map that shows my best guess of where the Enemy is massing. Be careful! And report back to me, and only me, when you have done all you can!"

A Deceiving Plot

What Balin does not know is that the tale of the Orc-army has been fed to him by the dark forces that seek to ruin both Dale and Erebor. It is a trap. So troubled is Balin by the fortunes of the cities that he has been fooled—Morlach dearly wishes him to send the company, since they have foiled so many of his plans.

Morlach hopes the heroes will meet their doom there, or at least allow the Nazgûl to move more openly. The folk of Dale and Erebor will soon have more troubles to worry about, for the Sorcerer of Forod aims to goad the Mountain to wage war upon the Bardings!

But for now, the heroes know nothing other than that their old friend Balin has asked them to spy out the Enemy and report back. He has little in the way of Treasure to offer mercenary members of the company, but he promises to see them well rewarded once Dáin comes to his senses and acknowledges their actions.

- Part Two -
The Vale of Bones

The company prepares to travel to a forest of ill-omen in order to prove that an army gathers in hiding to assault Dale. The player-heroes should gather whatever provisions they need, and then set about their destination. Balin provides the companions with a map, showing the preferred route to reach the Netherwood (see the illustration of Balin's map opposite).

Then, the Dwarf urges discretion: *"Go out through the Ravensgate to the north. Only when you are beyond the sight of the bell-towers of Dale should you turn to the south-east."*

Gathering Supplies and Rumours

Setting up for their journey, the companions will find that the stores of Dale are not as they once were, and the shopkeepers and outfitters are less than helpful to any they consider a stranger (and all Dwarves, even those made Thegn by King Bard himself, are strangers now). A successful roll of Insight or Courtesy reveals that folk are more scared than suspicious.

Bard has not been seen in public for months and rumours of his death are on every corner. Wagging tongues say that Dáin desires to take over the throne of Dale as well. After all, what claim did he have on Erebor! He is a Dwarf from the East, he just claimed the title of King under the Mountain during the war. He is an ambitious Dwarf!

Others say that Thegn Jofur rules the palace of Dale now and is king in all but name. He is an extremely stern ruler, at least to judge by the increasing number of guard patrols. What will become of the once jolly City of Bells?

Across the Upper Marches

Away from Dale, the map of Balin leads the company south-east. The plains of the northern portion of the Upper Marches are still in the grip of winter and the companions are unlikely to encounter many farmers or shepherds.

Only when they reach the rolling hills near the border with the Nether Marches the heroes start seeing the first traces of the spring to come. The heroes will spend about nine days crossing the Upper Marches and make three **Fatigue** tests (TN 16). If the heroes chance across a Hazard, one of the following episodes can be employed:

Hidden Holes (Scout - Wound)

Voles, rabbits, shrews, badgers and more dig burrows in which to winter. A misplaced step at the entrance to one of these holes can mean a tumble, a twisted ankle, or worse. The Scout must make a successful Explore test or find themselves hurt by a sudden fall. A failure means that the companion loses a success die's worth of Endurance or takes a Wound if the hero rolls an on the feat die.

The Howling in the Night (Look-out - Dangerous Meeting)

In the dead of night the air is split by the sounds of raucous howls. The Devourer (see page 124) did not come south alone, and the starving wolves of the waste can no longer wait to feast on Man's-flesh. As they draw closer to the company's camp, their bone-chilling howls can terrify even the most hardened hero. The Look-out must make an **Awareness** test. On a success, the companions have time to gather up enough torches to keep the wolves at bay for now. If the Look-out fails, they attack. There is at least one wolf for each companion.

Wolf of the Waste

Attribute Level	
5	
Endurance	**Hate**
20	4
Parry	**Armour**
4	2d
Skills	
Personality, 1	Survival, 2
Movement, 3	Custom, 0
Perception, 3	Vocation, 0
Weapon Skills	
Bite	3
Rend	1
Special Abilities	
Fear of Fire	Seize Victim*
Fell Speed	-

Weapons:

Weapon type	Damage	Edge	Injury	Called Shot
Bite	6	10	14	Pierce
Rend	5	👁	14	-

The Nether Marches

Soon after they pass the faint traces of the Old Dwarf Road crossing the Upper Marches roughly from east to west, the heroes enter the Nether Marches. Rolling hills give way to smoother terrain, as wide plains open up before the eyes of the travellers.

It takes the companions four more days to reach the Netherwood and they must make one more Fatigue test (TN 14). If they encounter a Hazard, adapt one episode from those listed below:

Cold Wind From the East (All Companions - Fatigue)

As the companions make ready to camp one night, a fierce wind begins to blow from the East. Its fingers seem to get everywhere... it lifts up tents, blows out campfires and reaches into the warmest of winter clothing to bring a chill to the heart. Each hero must make a **Travel** test, gaining a point of Fatigue on a failure or two points with an 👁.

Stolen Game (Huntsman - Misery)

One of the hunters has brought down some game, only to have it stolen by another predator of the Nether Marches – a long-eared fox or a falcon, perhaps. The Huntsman must make a **Hunting** test, becoming Miserable for the rest of the journey on a failure.

Into the Netherwood

After days in the high grass, the companions come in sight of the Netherwood. The ancient stretch of woodland is a dark patch rising from the plains, the surviving fragment of a greater forest that the Dwarves of the Iron Hills diminished to feed their hungry furnaces. The remaining trees stand tall and close together, as if preparing for a desperate last stand.

The map of Balin indicates a place where his agents spied a trail-head leading into the dark forest. It's a lonesome hill, rising a mile from the western eaves of the forest. From there, the companions head towards the forest, looking for the Orc camp.

Once inside the woods, the heroes struggle to find a passage among the tightly-packed trees. Fallen leaves gather in great drifts against the rills of the land, obscuring pits that twist ankles and sharp ridges that stub toes. After a

few hours of toilsome progress, the company encounters a dry stream bed. Skeletal, dead branches crunch underfoot, and sudden bursts of wind lift dust and dirt in great choking clouds. Eventually, the dry riverway enters a steep valley descending towards the shadowy heart of the forest — the company has found the Vale of Bones!

The Descent

Deep down in the vale, the companions can see tiny flickering lights: torches, perhaps campfires. The safest way to descend towards the lights is to follow the dry stream's course. Alternatively, the heroes can climb down along the rocky sides of the dale.

- Heroes that follow the stream bed must pass a single **Athletics** roll to keep their feet.

- Heroes that prefer to climb down along the sheer sides of the valley must make a series of four **Athletics** rolls instead, descending safely for a measure on each success. If the company reaches the bottom of the valley by climbing down, they find another entrance to the **Dark Passages** (see below).

Failing an **Athletics** roll causes the companion to slip and slide down for several yards, losing a Success die's worth of Endurance. Rolling an even on a successful roll sees the failing hero fall for the remaining distance, requiring a Protection test against TN 16.

Bones and Curses

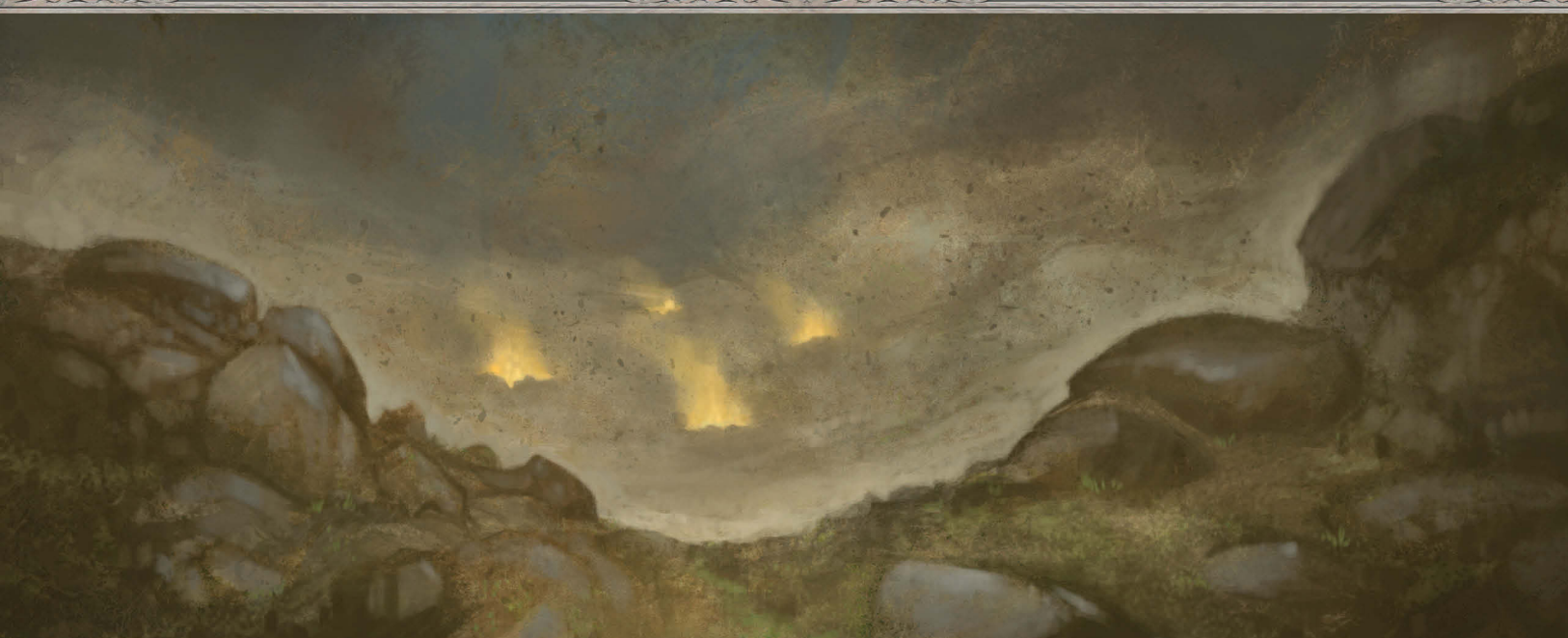
At the bottom of the climb the dale widens into a roughly circular opening, measuring several hundreds of yards across. The overhanging walls are a hundred feet tall, filling the area with darkness. Huge rocks, piles of deadwood and assorted debris fallen from above clutter the terrain, turning it into a maze.

But what alarms the heroes the most is the almost overpowering stench of rotting flesh, Goblin-filth and animal reek: the Vale of Bones is a blighted place, and the companions must all pass a Corruption test each day, or else gain one point of Shadow.

The companions can now explore the Vale of Bones, and may encounter any of the locations described below, before they reach the lair of the Devourer, at the Loremaster's discretion:

The Goblin Camp

Companions that choose to investigate the faint lights spied from above will quickly realise that the vale is not the camp of some great army waiting to sack Dale. Instead, they find a mostly empty encampment, inhabited only by a few dozens emaciated Goblins wandering in small groups among poorly flickering heaps of sticks and burning torches. The Goblins shiver and bicker in the dark, while attending to the cooking of meagre meals, like a single skewered rat, or a pot of watery soup of roots and



other, less identifiable ingredients. No one is watching for intruders.

Stealthy heroes approaching any one of the small gatherings will overhear the Goblins make bitter remarks about their current poor state and fortune:

"'He'll eat us soon enough. We need to leave here! I keep telling you!"

"No no no that's not right! He's been promised a meal of man's-flesh! He won't eat us if we do as we're told!

"He will so eat us! He's always hungry! He ate Gormul and Uzbug and Nashog and that other fat guy with the peg leg! He ate the bats! And we was supposed to be friends with them!"

"Trust me! I know what I 'eard. The spook promised him man's-flesh!"

"Urgh that spook! What's he want with us, I wonder?"

"Shut up, you! You're talking about things beyond your station! Is that rat done yet?"

"I'm so hungry!"

'Well you're only skinny and little! Imagine how hungry he gets! He's huge! With only Goblins to eat!"

"When we ran away, did you reckon he'd eat so many of us?"

"Shut up! This rat's as done as it's ever gonna be!"

There are several fires scattered amongst the huge boulders that litter the gorge floor, and the company will hear similar conversations at all of them - the theme is always food and hunger, and how to avoid being eaten. At one fire a Goblin passed out from hunger, and his fellow are making preparations to skin and eat him, muttering all the while about "doin' it quick so the master doesn't gobble us both up first".

Huge Dead Wings

The company stumbles across a pile of what at first appears to be great sheets of dusty leather, piled up with old bones. Closer inspection reveals this is the desiccated remains of a Giant Bat's wings. There is no sign of a torso, legs or head. If they really wish to investigate there are the remains of three Giant Bats here. Some of the wing bones have been crushed with what seems an enormous force.

Dark Passages

Heroes that creep close to the cliff walls along the dry stream might find their way into one of the underground passageways that riddle the walls of the vale. It is pitch black in these narrow tunnels, and the company might be surprised by hungry Goblins at any moment. However, if each hero can make either an **Explore** or **Riddle** test, they can find a safe way forward and upward, until they reach a crack in the rock walls of the passage, opening above the Goblin Camp. If they manage to do this, the heroes can hear the conversations of the ravenous Goblins from their hidden position, without risking discovery.

But there is a price to be paid for this good fortune – if they press on beyond the opening, when the heroes reach the far end of the vale, the rocky floor suddenly gives way and they tumble into the chamber of the Devourer! (See *An Ancient Enemy*, below).

The Skull Piles

As they proceed towards the opposite end of the vale, beyond the Goblin Camp, the company come to realise they are walking on bones. The misshapen skulls of Goblins, their ribs and thigh bones cover the floor. There is no army here, for this is a charnel house. Dried up sword belts, the tattered remains of Orc-mail and broken weapons jut out as floating debris in a sea of bleached bones. The darkness beyond torch or lantern light is now absolute, and the gorge walls close in tighter as the company pick their way through the bones toward the back of the defile.

An Ancient Enemy

Once the heroes reach the far end of the vale, suddenly and seemingly from all around comes a rasping voice, gravelly and arid.

"So! You come as I was told you would. Good. Too long has it been since I ate Man's-flesh! Come close... Let me savour your smell you before I gobble you up!"

If the company have any way to make light, now is the time to risk it: if they illuminate the chamber they will see a horrific sight. A huge, half-starved, albino Wolf-thing with crooked hind legs lies at the end of the valley.

The entire body of this huge and disgusting beast bear the marks of ancient injuries, so much that the thing could be mistaken for a carcass if it wasn't for the glint in its small, predatory eyes.

It slowly raises itself up, and its fur hangs in tatters. Great bald patches run across its bony head. Its mouth is stained with old blood. The stench is almost unbearable. Huge black flies rise lazily into the air from their nests in its stinking pelt.

"They call me the Devourer now, for I have eaten all my servants. Even those who served me well, even those who carried me here from the battlefield. And now I will eat you, and the master will mend my legs and I will return to Dale and the Mountain and finish what we began!"

"The Nazgûl will have the jewel of the Dwarves that the Dark Lord wants and the Mountain will fall. The bell towers will be pulled down, and all the Goblins and Bats and Wolves from miles around will return to feast! I will grow fat on the flesh of Men and Dwarves! So is it promised and so shall it be! Just as you were promised to me, fools..."

"Die now, dinner!"

The Devourer lunges forward to attack.

Fight or be Eaten

The companions have fallen into a trap, and must now defeat the monster, or die trying. The battle they are about to fight is made more challenging by the unique features of its terrain, but they might be able to exploit the weakness of the creature that is trying to eat them:

- **The Darkness:** The darkness of the Vale of Bones is unnaturally deep. Heroes without any source of light make their preliminary rolls to gain Combat Advantages at TN 18; Torch-bearing heroes roll at TN 16, as natural light only penetrates the darkness for a few feet. A magical source of light is bright enough to allow the companions to roll against the normal difficulty of TN 14.

- **Minions:** The Devourer is joined by one Ravenous Goblin for each hero in the company (or more, if the company is especially effective in battle).

- **Lame Legs:** The Devourer is crippled by the wounds he suffered to his rear legs and cannot move much. Once any Ravenous Goblins have been defeated, each companion in Rearward Stance will require only one companion in close combat, instead of the usual two.

- **The Footing:** The floor of the area is strewn with bones of all sizes, making it hard to move about without risking to trip and fall: all heroes are considered to be *moderately hindered* both attacking and defending. The Devourer and his minions do not suffer penalties due to reduced vision or footing, being well used to the environment of the vale.

The Devourer (Greater Warg)

Attribute Level	
8	
Endurance	Hate
80	10
Parry	Armour
4	4d
Skills	
Personality, 3	Survival, 3
Movement, 1	Custom, 1
Perception, 3	Vocation, 3
Weapon Skills	
Bite	3
Rend	3
Special Abilities	
Strike Fear (TN 16)	Foul Reek
Great Size	Horrible Strength
Commanding Voice	-

Weapons:

Weapon type	Damage	Edge	Injury	Called Shot
Bite	8	10	14	Pierce
Rend	8	👁	14	-

Weapons:

Weapon type	Damage	Edge	Injury	Called Shot
Bite	1	👁	10	-
Jagged Knife	3	👁	14	-

Ravenous Goblins

Attribute Level	
1	
Endurance	Hate
10	2
Parry	Armour
3	2d
Skills	
Personality, 1	Survival, 1
Movement, 3	Custom, 0
Perception, 1	Vocation, 0
Weapon Skills	
Jagged Knife	2
Bite	1
Special Abilities	
No Quarter	Snake-like Speed

A Wizard Unlooked For

At some point during the fight (when the Loremaster deems it most appropriate), Gandalf and Balin arrive to help them out: the two left Erebor some time after the heroes, having realised they sent the company right into a trap, and the Grey Wizard has employed every trick in his sleeve to speed up their pursuit.

So, just as things seem the most desperate, a bright white light shines out, illuminating the horror that is the Devourer and its blighted lair. The monster is stunned and blinded, and a booming voice is heard encouraging the companions on. *"Strike now while it is weakened! Slay the beast!"*.

The Devourer is severely hindered attacking and defending. If the company still fares too badly, Balin will stride into battle (Axe ♦♦♦) to assist them, screaming the Dwarven battle-cry: *"Baruk Khazâd! Khazâd ai-mênu!"*

After the battle, the company learn something more of Gandalf's mind. The Wizard is aware that something very wrong is occurring in Dale, and dark forces are at work. He will share this information and is keen to hear anything that the company learned from the Devourer or the Goblins.

If the company mentions the rumour of a Nazgûl being involved then he sighs heavily:

"So the Ringwraiths have taken an interest in the North again and dare to move against the kingdoms of Men and Dwarves. But at least we know now... perhaps we can set a trap for them, one to make it many long years before the Dark Lord chances his most powerful servants again."

Gandalf will confirm the guesses of any companions who venture that the 'jewel of the Dwarves' must be the Arkenstone. *"It is truly the heart of the mountain, and has a power upon any who look upon it. The theft of the Arkenstone might mean war in the North."*

After the impromptu council, Gandalf stands up. *"Now all of you must return to Dale. When you arrive there, you will certainly be the target of any secret allies of the Enemy. But it is not quite yet time for open defiance... weather any storm that comes your way, so that you can draw the traitors out into the open. And remember that hope may arrive at the last hour, unlooked for."*

- Part Three - A Warm Welcome

After uttering his final, mysterious words, the Wizard leaps up on his horse and departs. Balin shrugs.

"Well, there he goes again... we might as well be on our way back to Dale."

Companions heading west towards Dale soon discover that travelling along a route recently blazed by a Wizard is a good thing: the companions do not encounter any danger on the trip back.

After something less than two weeks (and a total of four Fatigue tests at TN 14), the greatest city in the North finally appears on the horizon by the end of the last day, and the heroes can reach the Traders Gate before sundown.

At the Gate

As they approach the Traders Gate, keen-eyed companions notice a larger number of guards than usual. Those who call Dale home recognise that these are men loyal to Jofur, who lately seem to have replaced the men of the King at every important post. If the heroes are strangers, Balin notices the change and informs them about it under his breath as the company draws closer to the checkpoint.

In prior days, such heroes might have easily passed into Dale with either a curt nod or an appreciative wave (depending on the company's reputation in the city) but now they are stopped at the gate. The guards look over the companions, referring to a folded sheaf of papers again and again. Finally, their leader holds up his hand, and a dozen guards gather close by.

"Balin, son of Fundin, and his known associates," announces the guard captain. *"You are wanted folk, charged with murder and treason. You must come with us."*

The heroes have only moments to decide what to do. Possibly to their surprise, Balin surrenders at once. He certainly doesn't want to raise a blade against Dalemen; besides, he trusts Gandalf's promises of forthcoming aid. See the appropriate section below to play out the consequences of the players' actions.

Surrender

If the company chooses to give themselves up to the City Guard, they are stripped of all weapons and equipment. Then heavy iron manacles are placed on the wrists of each hero, and they are led into the city. They spend an uncomfortable night in custody, given bread and water but nothing else. They rarely see a guard, and when they do, the guards do not speak.

Go ahead to *The Trial*, below.

Flight

If the companions choose to flee, they will be leaving Balin to his fate alone — a Misdeed worth at least 1 Shadow

point. They will be pursued, and a bell can be heard ringing from the gatehouse. More guards are coming!

The escape attempt can be run as a prolonged action requiring 9 successful rolls of **Athletics** or **Stealth**. Accumulating three or more failures means a group of guards (a Guard Commander and at least one City Guard for each hero, see page 46 of *Erebor*) has caught up to them.

While the company is being pursued for evil reasons, the guards themselves are innocent pawns. Slaying any of them, even in the heat of battle, is a Misdeed worth at least 3 Shadow points.

If the company is overtaken, they are manacled and dragged off in chains to the gaol as above. If they escape, then a mysterious raven will find them the next day. The bird doesn't speak, but delivers a note and flies away without waiting for a response. The note outlines that Balin is on trial for murder and will likely be sentenced to death. It urges the heroes to return to Dale and testify on his behalf.

If the company remains in hiding, another note delivered in the same way reads *"Look for a light on the south wall just before dawn. A friend will be waiting"*. See *Part Four - The City of Bells*.

Fight

Heroes that draw swords immediately against the guards will find themselves confronted by the Guard Commander and two City Guards for each hero. After every three rounds of battle, another Guard Commander and more City Guards show up as reinforcements.

Sooner or later, the company will find themselves outnumbered and possibly outmatched. Hopefully, the player-heroes will surrender at some point, before they are defeated or before they shed too much innocent blood. In both cases, they soon find themselves in a cell. (Once the battle-lust subsides, the Loremaster must distribute an appropriate amount of Shadow points for the battle).

The company might wish to save Dale from the Enemy, but the City Guard, while acting under erroneous orders, are not servants of the Enemy. See **The Trial**, next.

The Trial

The next morning, shortly after the dawn light slants into their cells, the company are taken in chains to the Royal Palace of Dale, to hear the King's justice. At the far end of the main hall Bard sits on his carved throne, wearing the golden crown of Dale upon a troubled brow. Before him on the raised dais sit Thegn Jofur and Lord Hakon, and an assortment of other minor nobles. A crowd of

onlookers has gathered, and more will arrive as words of the accusations spread across town.

Balin is brought in, in heavier chains than the companions. He appears battered and bruised, a grim expression on his face. When the Dwarf takes his place in front of the dais, Thegn Jofur looks briefly at Bard, as if expecting a reaction from him - when he realises that the King is remaining completely motionless, Jofur stands, proceeding to read the charges.

"Balin of Erebor and companions. You are hereby charged under the laws of Dale with the crimes of treason and murder. You have willingly and maliciously committed capricious crimes to the detriment of the reign of King Bard, and have grievously wounded the people of Dale, and grossly endangered them with your perfidy..."

At this point he stops and shuffles his papers. He appears less than comfortable, and indeed gives the companions an uncharacteristic pained look. He pulls himself together, regaining his usual haughty demeanour.

"On behalf and in the name of King Bard I call you to answer the charge. How do you plead?"

Balin simply raises his head and looks straight ahead. He will refuse to speak throughout the trial. Lord Hakon stands.

"This is ridiculous. Get on with it Jofur. They are clearly guilty! I have said so on many occasions that these ne'er do wells and vagabonds should be at last cast from our city! We have been too tolerant of their kind! Of Dwarves, of strangers and wanderers! Of those from the East..."

He looks meaningfully at Jofur at this point.

The Litany of Charges

At this point, anything that the companions have done in recent times that could be twisted against them should be brought up. Agents of Mordor have spied on them throughout their time in Dale and Erebor. Any time they were in public, or could have been spied upon in secret, there will be evidence against them. The Loremaster should be careful to cite only events that the Nazgûl or their agents could have known about, but also be mindful that the Sorcerer's powers are beyond the limits of mortal agents. The charges should be shocking, and obviously a twisting of prior events where the company was doing good. Inciting their tempers is part of the plan. Here are some suggestions:

The Silver Needle: The company may be blamed for the destruction of Kelda's shop or her death. As appropriate, they might be charged with the slaying or beating of Vig, Kasper, Swain or Longo. If Maugor was seen in public, they will be charged with smuggling an Orc into Dale.

Of Hammers and Anvils: If a fight broke out at the toy-market, the companions will be charged with inciting a riot. Depending on the outcome of the adventure they might be listed as co-conspirators with the traitorous Lord Gunvar or in league with Dwarf assassins that slew the Barding noble.

To Dungeons Deep: If the Coat of Silver Mail was delivered to the Dwarves (whether by judging it to be their rightful possession or as a diplomatic overture) then the heroes are charged with surrendering the heirloom of King Bard to a foreign power. If the armour went missing in the course of the adventure, they are charged with stealing it.

Sleeping Dragons Lie: If the company was unable to save Lord Elstan, they will be charged with his disappearance. If Skarf Skulson was slain, they are liable for his murder. And, perhaps worst of all, the companions are charged with conspiring with Dwarves and consorting with a Dragon — this last charge causes audible gasps in the courtroom.

Dark Waters: The heroes might be charged with the death of Orsmid or Odvarr, inciting trouble in the Elven Quarter, the theft of the jewels of Esgaroth, vandalizing the very foundations of Lake-town and harbouring fugitives from the Elven-king. These charges are not brought directly against the company, but are delivered as examples of their behaviour in the free city of Lake-town.

It is possible that the company will need to be restrained or subdued if they become too agitated in the face of these charges. The guards will only briefly hesitate before clubbing the shackled prisoners on Hakon's nod.

The Conspirators' Masterstroke

Once the heroes' various wrongdoings are recounted before the King, Lord Hakon reveals the main crime they are charged with:

"I have kept this accusation for last, as I wanted you here assembled to evaluate these criminals for their past misdeeds, before we even considered their most nefarious action... My King, let it be put on record that the accomplices of Balin, son of Fundin, are accused of murdering Thrun, the toy maker and friend to all, who was discovered near his workshop two mornings ago, strangled to the point of death!"

Thrun's Tragic Termination

The report of Thrun's death have not been exaggerated, unfortunately. In fact, the cunning Dwarf was murdered by an agent of the Sorcerer of Forod, to help Lord Hakon's attempt to stage Balin's treason. A lover of street food and drink, Thrun was easily poisoned by a fake street vendor of ale.

The drug-laced drink asphyxiated him as soon as he returned home, and made him appear as if someone strangled him. Thrun didn't die right away though: the Dwarf managed to return to the streets, only to collapse after a few yards, in front of a small crowd. In his last moments the toymaker was delirious, and called out to the companions for help several times.

The assembled crowd is now very large, and the voices that are raised in outrage are almost deafening. The guards tighten their ranks to keep a distance from the onlookers and the accused. Lord Hakon continues:

"I am not bringing about these accusations lightly. Thrun himself accused them with his own words several times in his agony, in front of several witnesses."

"It is now clear from my investigation that these reckless adventurers have been working with the Dwarf Balin, in an attempt to undermine the crown of Dale, and seize it for Erebor. I recommend that he and his conspirators be either permanently imprisoned or executed forthwith. What say you, Your Highness?"

King Bard remains morose and unresponsive, as if his thoughts are elsewhere. Eventually he sighs and says:

"Do you have anything to say in your defence?"

The Nazgûl Watches

Depending on the disposition of the players, the Loremaster may wish to tip the hand of the Sorcerer now. The heroes might get a sense of chill sweeping through the courtroom, or see a black-clad figure in an open doorway out of the corner of their eyes. For some groups, this may be too much. Others may appreciate a clear clue of what is going on.

Setting Tolerance

At this point, the companions have little more than their cunning and reputation to use against the charges they face. The Tolerance for the company's response to Bard is based on the highest Wisdom in the company, as the King's judgement may be clouded by his grief, and possibly by the spells of the Ringwraith, but he has not completely lost his wits. This rating is modified positively by any level of Standing enjoyed in Dale, but is reduced by the highest level of Standing that they have in Erebor: The assembled nobles are suspicious of their Dwarven neighbours to the north, and especially of anyone who has ties to the Dwarven kingdom.

Introduction

The heroes have naturally no need of a formal introduction, but the company has a chance to soften Bard's mood, should they attempt to remind the court of their previous services rendered to the King. A roll of **Courtesy** will do: On a great or extraordinary result, Tolerance is improved by one, in addition to their normal effect of counting as additional successes.

Interaction

The companions must address the charges that they face. The following are various approaches that they may take.

- The heroes may assert that they were not in Dale at the time of the murder. Unfortunately, their alibi is scoffed at by Lord Hakon and other nobles, and without any witnesses ("Gandalf the Wizard you say? Well, if he was there where is he now? Gone you say. How convenient!") no roll will convince King Bard.

- Recounting the truth of what is going on - that a Nazgûl plots to steal the Arkenstone and bring both Dale and Erebor to ruin, results in open laughter first from Lord Hakon, and then from many other nobles. Hakon has already salted this ground, and the truth will not find root here.

- The heroes might wish to call up witnesses, but Lord Hakon refuses to delay the trial to track down 'wandering merchants of the East' (Katun or any of her followers) or 'itinerant craftspeople' (Orsmid or Magan). It goes without saying that the testimony of any Dwarf on their behalf is completely unacceptable.

- If the company names Lord Elstan, then King Bard sits upright. If Elstan survived the Dragon-hunt, he retired to a cottage west of the city... the King motions to one of his guards. The old knight will arrive in a couple of hours. Hopefully the court will not be out of patience with the company by then. (If Lord Elstan can speak on behalf of the company, his testimony counts as two successes in their favour).

The best chance that the companions have is to poke holes at the various charges that Hakon has trumped up. Careful questioning with **Riddle** might point out inconsistencies, or reveal that Hakon's information must have come from a supernatural source.

Throughout the defence, Balin remains silent. He will not aid the heroes in his or their defence, but neither will he hinder them.

The Judgement

Sooner or later, King Bard will raise his hand. He has heard enough. He stands to proclaim judgement over the defendants, according to the number of successes they accrued.

0-2. (Narrow success): "You are guilty enough of the various charges assembled against you. Tomorrow morning you will be executed as criminals and traitors." See *The Pits*, below.

3-6. (Success): "I know not the rights and wrongs of men nor women's hearts. But you shall not be slain for these crimes, if indeed crimes they are. I care not." He turns to the captain of the guard. "Take them to the Pits, and let them live there, beyond my sight." See *The Pits*, below.

7+. (Great Success): "I cannot vouchsafe your guilt in these matters. But I do not doubt that trouble follows in your wake. You are exiled from the city, for the period of one year and one day." He turns to the captain of the guard. "Escort them to the Traders Gate and let it be known that they are not allowed to return, upon pain of death." See *Exile from Dale*, below.

If King Bard has sentenced Balin and the company to death, then Lord Hakon smiles smugly. He has done his true master's bidding.

If the company has been sentenced to the deep cells or exiled from the city, then Hakon is more peevish. He sweeps from the courtroom, declaring *"This is not over!"*

Thegn Jofur nods meaningfully to the companions as they are escorted away.

Jofur's Plea

It is possible that the company may choose to adopt the stoic silence of Balin. In this case, Jofur will take a chance and approach them, whispering fiercely:

"Your lives are on the line! You MUST impress the King. You can't get out of this fix, but you must avoid the executioner's sword! Convince him!"

This will give away that Jofur is not the villain of the piece, but now may be the appropriate time to reveal it.

The Pits

After the trial, guards escort the company and Balin out of the main hall of the Royal Palace, at spear-point if necessary. They are swiftly taken out of sight of any onlooker, and led to the Pits, the deepest gaol of Bard's palace. By the number of steps they climb down, the companions have the sense that they are deep underground. Some players may enjoy a game of trying to remember the many twists, turns and staircases that they take.

Eventually, the companions and their jailers reach a narrow corridor, with doors of wrought iron and heavy wood, set into cold stone. One of the doors is unlocked, revealing a dark and cold cell beyond. The company is pushed in, and the door is closed with an ominous thud and the click of a lock. The guards take Balin further into the dungeon.

Time passes painfully slowly. There is a tiny grille in the thick door that shows a short length of damp, torch-lit corridor and nothing else. Balin is imprisoned elsewhere: even if the heroes call for him, there is no response. There is a steady dripping of water, and the occasional drifting, distant sound of the guards making merry somewhere out of sight.

Escape?

Some time in the bitter watches of the night, Thegn Jofur appears at the door to their cell. He looks extremely nervous as he shows them the key through the door, to make clear his intention and prevent them from attacking him as soon as he opens the cell.

"Listen! We have but a short time! You must go from this door to the left. Then, follow the corridor, go down the stairs. Go quietly through the guard room — they are all sleeping off the drugged wine I gave them. Take the right-hand passage out and then go up two flights of stairs. You will come to a canal, with a dock. Find a craft or swim out. Go! Just before dawn, look for a light on the southern wall. He will help you! Go! I must find Balin now."

With this, he unlocks the door.

The Shadow of the North

In the corridor, Jofur hands the companions a small bundle containing some bread and a flask. There might even be a few simple weapons as well (a few daggers and knives). But as Jofur reaches out, the light from the torches grows suddenly dim and there is a chill in the air. Jofur drops the bundle, and the flask shatters. Blood-red wine stains the stones of the corridor. *"Go! Go! You must fly! There is no time!"* he shrieks.

At one end of the corridor stands a hooded and robed figure, a corroded iron sword gripped in its mailed hand. The air about the figure flickers with black fire. An aura of terror exudes from the silent apparition: Each companion

must pass a Fear test against TN 18 (due to the Wraith's *Thing of Terror* ability, worsened by the circumstances of the encounter) or become daunted (see *The One Ring Roleplaying Game*, page 146).

With fear in his eyes, Jofur gestures desperately for the companions to flee. *"Run you fools!"* He draws his sword and grabs a torch from the wall. Then, with the battle-cry of his Easterling ancestors, he charges towards the Nazgûl. It is time to go.

The Company Remains

Exceptionally bold companions might not allow Jofur to stand alone against the Ringwraith. But they are largely unarmed and certainly unarmoured... it is unlikely that they will defeat the Nazgûl and the corridor is too narrow for them to even aid Jofur much. He will again beg them to run.

If they insist on fighting, perhaps using torches, then a Loremaster might allow them a slight victory... the Sorcerer relents for a moment and Jofur and the heroes can make a mad dash for it. Somewhere along the way, Jofur will make a different turn, explaining that he goes to seek Balin out.

Otherwise, if the heroes are insistent on the combat, then the Sorcerer of Forod will unleash all of his might upon them (starting on page 142). After all, he came to kill them in their cell. Jofur will fall, and probably some of the companions as well.

Balin might arrive suddenly, having broken free of his own cell and liberated some swords from the guards, possibly giving the heroes a chance to make a fighting retreat. Sooner or later, the heroes must escape the way Jofur suggested, perhaps with a Nazgûl chasing them.

In the event that the heroes somehow gain the upper hand, the Sorcerer will not let himself be destroyed here. Eventually he will fade into the shadows, and make ready the next stage of his plan.

The Way Out

Jofur's instructions are accurate and if the company follow them, they can escape the Pits by an underground canal. A leaky old rowboat is tied to the dock. The Loremaster may add any number of complications to this scene, in case it was too easy for them to escape their fate so far:

- The heroes might need to make rolls of **Stealth** to get past the guards.
- Jofur's instructions were a bit hasty: the heroes need to make an **Explore** test to stay on track.
- The Nazgûl might decide to pursue them through the tunnels. The Loremaster might then make the heroes use **Athletics** to dodge the alerted guards, **Riddle** to pick the right way in the maze and another **Athletics** roll to put enough space between them and the Sorcerer to escape. Should they still escape, it will be by the skin of their teeth...

Exile from Dale

If the company was lucky enough to earn this result, armed guards soon escort them from the main hall of the Palace, out onto the city streets. As the escort proceeds through town, certain guards hang back whilst other guards take their place. Perceptive heroes might soon realise that the heroes are soon surrounded only by Jofur's men. There is no sign of Balin, he has taken a different way.

Thegn Jofur joins the group as they approach the city gates. While he sternly lectures the heroes on receiving such a light sentence for their various crimes, he passes a scrap of parchment to one of the heroes. Upon leaving the city, their gear is returned to them and a captain of the City Guard repeats King Bard's injunction forbidding them to return for a year and a day again.

When the heroes can examine the note, it says *"Look for a light on the south wall just before dawn. A friend will be waiting."*

– Part Four –
The City of Bells

For one reason or another, the companions are standing outside the southern wall of Dale. Just before dawn, one of them sees a faintly glowing red light at a certain spot along the wall.

When the heroes approach, they will be greeted by a familiar smell – pipe-weed alight and being vigorously smoked by a certain Wizard of renown. He is sitting on the top of the wall and with one foot he kicks down a rope ladder. *"I was beginning to wonder when you would arrive."* he says in greeting.

Once the heroes climb up, they can tell him all about their experiences. If they have met the Sorcerer of Forod then Gandalf nods gravely.

"One of the greatest trials of both Dale and Erebor is coming to pass. Smaug would laugh if he could see that City and Mountain are at each other's throat. We can only hope that we will be able to upset the Enemy's plans."

Gandalf urges them to return to Dale... not in the open, but in secret. He says that they have many friends there, and they should be able to find help. When they're ready, they must meet him in Erebor.

"Now, I have a missing Dwarf to attend to. Be careful, my friends!"

Quicker than quick, Gandalf is away and the sun is beginning to rise.

Straight to Erebor

Once they have spoken to Gandalf, the company might decide to press on to the Lonely Mountain. This is unlikely, as the heroes are unprepared and probably worse for wear. But a determined or reckless group of players (or a company of heroes that call Erebor home) might be bent on it. In which case, skip directly to Part Five: Inside Information.

Taking Stock

At this point of the adventure, the heroes are possibly at one of the lowest points of their careers, and it's worth taking a moment to tally up the situation.

- It is likely been more than a day since their last meal. Each hero gains a point of Fatigue, two if they had to swim in the cold river as well. They cannot recover any Endurance nor lose any Fatigue until they have

had good food, a safe place to sleep and a warm change of clothes.

- They have been betrayed by sinister forces at work, and it seems as if the King himself has named them traitors to the crown: Each hero must pass a **Wisdom** test (TN 16) or become temporarily Miserable until they find someone who will support them in their cause.

- They will need weapons, armour and other equipment. This might be less pressing if the companions were simply exiled, but it is a good idea for heroes with distinctive gear to set that equipment aside in lieu of simpler and less noticeable pieces.

- Finally, once they have recovered their wits and made themselves whole again, they will need to find some way into Erebor.

The remainder of this chapter is devoted to various personages and locales the companions might visit to get help. Interacting with individuals they previously met gives the players and their characters a chance to enjoy everything they achieved throughout their earlier adventures, and is the pay off of the truth that was denied them in the trial.

Since it is uncertain who the companions will visit and in what order, the Loremaster will have to weave a tapestry of sneaking through Dale using the following threads. The heroes begin at the south wall, close to the Commons.

The Need for Stealth

The company must move around Dale, but they are exiles or wanted fugitives... they will not want to attract the attention of the City Guard. Fortunately, the City of Bells is still the heart of the North and there are more people here than the Guard could ever hope to keep track of.

- Whenever the heroes move to a new district, have them make rolls of either **Stealth** or **Riddle**. A hero that gets a great success can cover for another hero who failed, an extraordinary success can make up for two failures. If most of the heroes succeed, they go unnoticed in the area. If more fail than succeed then they've been spotted!

A generous Loremaster might have the first set of guards that find the company be some of Jofur's men. They'll provide a knowing wink, caution the heroes to be more discreet, and then move off, saying *"These aren't the troublemakers we're looking for."*

But otherwise the guards will be alerted and the only reasonable course of action will be for the heroes to flee. An escape attempt can be resolved as a series of prolonged **Athletics** tests. Each hero that gets five successes has given the guards the slip. Any heroes who fail to get the needed successes within eight rolls are thrown into the Pits and won't be seen again until the end of the adventure, if at all.

Rumours in the City

The companions are known to the Dale-folk, and their imprisonment was met with mixed reactions. As they sneak about town, the heroes might overhear some talk:

- Horror that they and Balin were traitors.
- Shock that King Bard would imprison or execute such heroes.
- Stark warnings against the wandering life.
- Advice to keep one's head down in such times.
- This is proof of the ill-intent of Dwarves and indeed all strangers.
- War is inevitable now.
- People wondering if they should pack up and leave the city now.
- The good times are over... war was always coming.

Anvil Way (Thrun's Workshop)

The company may wish to visit Thrun's workshop to find out what really happened to the toymaker. Sadly, from the outside nothing contradicts the story told by Lord Hakon during the trial: the news about Thrun's death seems correct, and his workshop is closed.

If the companions try the door, they find it's locked, using a sturdy Dwarven padlock. Picking the lock requires a roll

of **Craft** (TN 14 for Dwarves, 18 for others). But there is another way in: the shop sits on a corner with a secluded side street, so a determined companion might sneak in through a window (only a roll of **Athletics** is required).

Once inside, the heroes find the following items of interest:

Comforts. Thrun was fond of the many different food-stalls of Market Square and thus kept no provisions here. But he had a small bedroom above his workshop. There is a bed there and a chest with a few blankets and a couple of spare travelling cloaks (with detachable hoods). The company can rest here.

Mechanical birds. Many varieties of Thrun's speciality craft can be found, in various states of repair or development. The companions can spend some time tinkering with one or more bird automatons - with a roll of **Craft** (TN 16) a hero can make a bird fly from one hero to another (perhaps carrying a note or very small item) up to a distance of 80 yards, or gather up a flock of them. When the flock is activated, they won't fly very far but they are incredibly distracting – a companion can activate the flock as an action in combat to make all foes *moderately hindered* for the following two rounds.

Fireworks. A small chest placed high on a shelf contains Thrun's small collection of fireworks. Heroes that decide to use them in combat might be able to employ them in various ways. See *Using Fireworks in Battle*, opposite.

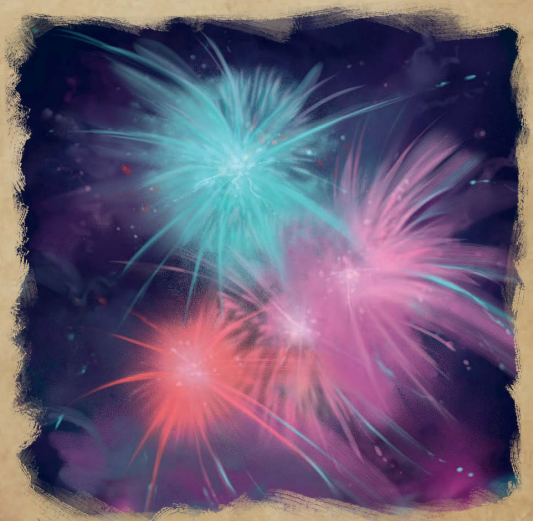
Weapons. Unarmed heroes won't find proper wargear here, but they can use some of Thrun's larger tools as weapons. Chisels and knives can serve as Daggers, and there are a couple of small hand Axes as well.

Traces of Treachery. If the companions search the workshop, they find evidence suggesting that Thrun struggled against someone, overturning chairs and throwing tools all over the place. A great or extraordinary roll of **Search** (or an additional roll of **Riddle**) suggests another version: Thrun was alone, and wrecked his house while suffering from great pain! Among the fragments of a smashed mechanical contraption lies a last, damning piece of evidence: a small cup of silver, one from which Thrun used to drink when eating out.

Using Fireworks in Battle

Inventive (or desperate) heroes might wish to employ fireworks against their enemies. The best way would probably be to light them up and throw them as explosives. It is up to the Loremaster's discretion but three possible rulings might be:

- A hero in Rearward stance can throw a bundle of firework sticks at an enemy. Using the rules for throwing, the hero must make a roll using the Dagger skill. On a success, the explosion causes 8 points of damage, 12 on a great success, 16 on an extraordinary roll. However, if the roll misses and an is produced, the hero receives the damage instead, as the firework explodes in their hand!
- Employed as a distraction, exploding fireworks cause each adversary in combat to make a Vocation roll against TN 16. Any who fail are *moderately hindered* for one round.
- Exploding fireworks might trigger an adversary's Fear of Fire if they are within range.



Brokenstone

Heroes on the run might remember the training barracks in which Longo the thief used to hide, especially if they discovered the secret canal entrance. Unfortunately, the

tumbled-down building is only in a worse state... it can be a hideout, but it doesn't provide anything other than a place to lie low for a time.

The Commons (Katun)

If the heroes head straight into this jumbled area of tents and temporary huts from the south wall they do not need to make checks to avoid the Guards at that early hour. Katun and her fellow Easterling merchants can be found here. Katun herself has just set down to breakfast – exceptionally strong tea, flat-bread and honey – in a large purple and gold tent where she normally conducts trade meetings.

If the heroes have good relations with the Easterlings (having shown Katun and her fellows respect in **The Silver Needle**, for example) then she will provide new clothing for the heroes from her stocks of fine Eastern garments. Such garb allows each companion to roll the Feat die twice and take the best result when trying to avoid the guards using **Stealth** or **Riddle**. If Katun owes more to the heroes (for example, if they saved her life or livelihood during their adventures) then she can provide some weapons – curved swords, strange-handled daggers and dark-wooded bows to the heroes as well.

If they speak to her of the Nazgûl then the merchant nods. She has seen and heard enough in the alleyways and dark passages of Dale to make her think an emissary of the Dark Lord has come. She can tell the heroes of how these villains plague the land of her birth, setting brother against brother and sister against sister. She is too mournful of her own past to give very many details, but she warns that Dale is in terrible danger if a Wraith is in the city. Katun is wise enough that she may suggest to the company to visit others within the city that will be favourable to them.

Residential Quarter (Domi)

The companions will visit the residential quarter if they try to find Domi, the scholar from the Blue Mountains (see **To Dungeons Deep**, page 43). The Dwarf has yet to return west, and stays in a comfortable house not far from the 'Nest', the keep of the City Guard. If the company manages to sneak up to his front door, Domi will be shocked to see them alive but will listen to what they have to say. He has followed their fortunes closely since they aided him and he believes that they have been wronged. Domi can only speak vaguely of dark forces moving in Dale, seeking to bring ruin to them all.

Domi can provide the following benefits to the company:

Comforts. The scholar does not keep much food in his lodgings, but can supply some bread, meat and drink. It can make a fine meal for a single person (fulfilling that requirement, see **Taking Stock** on page 134) or it can be shared amongst the company. Doing so offers meagre

compensation for hunger, but does strengthen the bond between the heroes. Raise the Fellowship pool by 1 point.

Weapons. If the companions are really stuck for weapons he will gift them his belt. It holds a finely-made short sword and a dagger. Should the heroes ask him to procure more, the Dwarf will sternly refuse - he will not risk shopping for weapons on behalf of the company.

Papers. Domi can write a letter of introduction for the company. If the heroes present it at the gates of Erebor, they will be allowed to pass within (see *The Front Gate* on the facing page).

A Kingly Gift. If the Loremaster deems that the companions have convinced Domi that they can effectively oppose the evil that is threatening the North, the Dwarf sighs, as he has made a weighty decision. Operating a hidden mechanism, Domi opens a secret door and descends a narrow set of stairs, bidding the heroes to wait. When he returns, the Dwarf is carrying a bundle: the Coat of Silver Mail! *"I have been entrusted with it, to see if I can learn more of its history. But now my heart tells me that it is the time for action and not study. Take it."* (see page 44 for the enchantments laid on the armour.)

The Quays (Balin's house)

Balin's small house is under constant watch. If the heroes dare to approach, then they must make two tests to avoid the guards (one for entering the district and one for approaching the house). Any companion with appropriate traits (such as *Suspicious*, *Wary* or especially *Foresighted*) should receive a warning... if the heroes try to enter the house without distracting its watchers then they'll be arrested again (or perhaps for the first time... if this is the case, then proceed to *The Trial* above). Those who do manage to sneak into it will find that someone has already ransacked the place, apparently seeking any scrap of evidence that they could find.

Elstan's Cottage

The heroes will have to leave Dale to reach the cottage of the old knight. Elstan is glad to see the company – they saved his life when he was left for dead and no evil rumours could turn him against them. He cautions them against being rash, but then changes his mind and urges them to save the town of Dale. Wet-eyed, he will press onto them all the war-gear he possesses and give them a token that should allow them to pass the gates of Erebor. He's not sure if it still works, or will work in others' hands, but it is all he can offer.

The heroes can gain the following advantages:

Rest. Elstan's cottage is small, too small for the heroes to find much rest. He can provide them with some spare clothes and he has enough food to make a good meal for one person. The heroes can also share the food out. The

The Royal Palace (King Bard)

With the heroes being exiles or maybe even fugitives, the Royal Palace is off-limits for them. Should they show their face there, they would be immediately arrested. This risk notwithstanding, it is possible that very experienced companions would be insistent that if they just speak to the King in private all will be resolved.

If the heroes have solid bonds of friendship with the King, this might indeed come to pass. King Bard is not in his best state of mind though - during the course of *The Laughter of Dragons* campaign, Bard has become distant, as he fears his kingdom is threatened and suspects everyone. He will need more than just reassurances, the player-heroes must bring proof (of the scheming of the Nazgûl, of their innocence, etc.).

The Loremaster can exploit this turn of events in various ways. For example, if Thegn Jofur is alive (if the heroes were exiled or fled from the guards and never faced trial) then the Sorcerer of Forod will attack while the companions are conferring with the King. This aggression will give Jofur another chance to heroically sacrifice himself so that the King and the heroes can flee to Erebor unhindered.

first time they do this they add a point to the Fellowship pool. The second time provides enough food to ensure that each hero has had enough to eat and drink.

Weapons. Elstan keeps a set of weapons ready and stores various other weapons he has won or been gifted throughout his career in oiled cloths in a large chest in his kitchen. The precise weapons available are left to the Loremaster but it is likely that the company will be able to re-arm here.

Papers. Elstan's token will allow the heroes to enter Erebor (see *The Front Gate* opposite).

- Part Five -
Inside Information

This part of the adventure is written considering that the heroes have now managed, somehow, to recoup some of what has been stolen from them – dignity at least, if not their weapons and other belongings. Now, they are ready to go to Erebor and warn Dáin that the Sorcerer of Forod seeks the Arkenstone.

Meanwhile...

Whether the heroes have seen the King after the trial or not, the words and deeds of the company have not gone completely unnoticed by Bard: slowly, the Dragon-slayer is moved to action. He resolves to do so for a combination of reasons, based on the progress of the campaign so far. Maybe he was visited secretly by Balin and Gandalf, who came to him to warn him of impending danger, or maybe there is more in him of his old self than meets the eye after all, and he was able to puzzle out the situation by himself. What is important is that King Bard heads to the Lonely Mountain with a small retinue, to meet with King Dáin, roughly at the same time as the heroes. Is he going to meet his old friend in anger, to accuse him of treachery, or is it wisdom that dictated this course of action? The Loremaster must decide, based on how King Bard has been portrayed so far in the campaign.

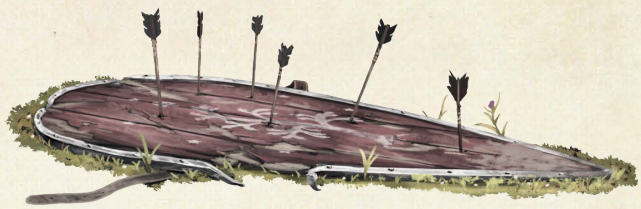
Entering Erebor

There are only two ways for the player-heroes to enter the Kingdom of the Lonely Mountain – through the front door or a secret entrance.

The Front Gate

Dwalin's Stone Guard warriors stand watch over the entrance to Erebor. Any Dwarf can get past them as a matter of course, and a Dwarf of Erebor with a Standing of 4 or more can bring along his companions without problems. Otherwise, foreigners are going to be questioned about their identity and business in the Lonely Mountain, and possibly be denied access, should they be recognised as fugitives or exiles from Dale. There are ways around this, of course. Elstan's token will allow them entrance, as will Domi's letter. In any of these cases, the heroes will be taken to Dwalin. It will be his job to arrange their visit to Erebor.

If the heroes are confident that their hard-earned fame should pave their way directly to the throne, they might demand an audience with King Dáin himself. For a company which has done much in the service of Erebor, this might be the easiest route to success, but it's likely that Dwalin will need to be convinced of the company's need to see his king (see *The Stubborn Warrior*, overleaf.)



Sneaking in the Front Door

The heroes might contrive other, more elaborate, plans to get into Erebor. Perhaps Katun has a shipment of cloth going to Erebor and the companions will hide among her wares as they are delivered to the Front Gate. Or they might be friends with another merchant and make arrangements to be shipped in as another basket of grain or another barrel full of apples. In these cases once the heroes are in the Mountain, see Finding The Way, below.

A Secret Entrance

The company might know of a hidden way into Erebor. Perhaps the fissure that Niping's allies used to gain access

to the First Forge has not be adequately blocked up again, or perhaps the heroes might know of the Back Door (that said, they must either have an accomplice on the inside open the door for them, or they must be in possession of the Key of Erebor – a rather unlikely possibility!)

Once they have gained entrance to the Mountain, they must find Dáin. See *Finding the Way*, below.

The Stubborn Warrior

If the Stone Guard have either stopped the company from entering Erebor or caught them sneaking about, they will escort the companions to Dwalin. The old warrior is quite on edge: the Tolerance for this encounter is equal to their lowest Valour score (Standing always modifies this rating). If Dwalin is predisposed against the heroes (see page 62 and the section below), then Tolerance is halved (rounding down).

Introduction

The heroes will certainly want to give some account of themselves, although they might already be known to Dwalin. If the heroes were caught by the Stone Guard then even a successful roll here counts as a failure. Dwalin sees them only as potential prisoners and conspirators.

Interaction

Dwalin knows that King Bard is cloistered with King Dáin, but he is not yet privy to the reasons why. Here are some various approaches the company might take to persuade the Dwarf that they are in Erebor on an errand of great import:

King Bard has been tricked! The companions try to convince Dwalin that the soft Men of Dale have been affected by the Shadow: this requires a **Persuasion** roll.

King Dáin is in danger! Convincing Dwalin that his king is under threat is much harder. This needs an **Awe** roll, TN 18.

The Nazgûl seek the Arkenstone! Everyone knows that the jewel of Erebor is safe in Thorin's tomb. To convince Dwalin otherwise requires a **Persuasion** roll (TN 18).

We are expected visitors! Dáin said nothing to Dwalin about the company, but as long as they presented themselves at the Front Gate this is an ordinary roll of **Courtesy**.

Possible Outcome

Dwalin's final decision is based on the results that the company achieved before he ran out of patience.

0-2. (Narrow Success): Dwalin doesn't know what to make of the company, but he's not letting them see Dáin immediately. He instructs the Stone Guard to escort the heroes to a secure area. (See *Breaking Free*, below.)

3-5. (Success): Dwalin believes that the company has some business with King Dáin. He instructs the Stone Guard to escort them to the Great Hall of Thráin. From there, the company can hear echoing voices in a side chamber and come to the Tomb themselves (again, see *Breaking Free*, below).

6+. (Great Success): Dwalin realises that King Dáin and Erebor are in great peril. He personally escorts the heroes to King Dáin at the Tomb of Thorin Oakenshield.

Finding the Way

Once inside the Mountain, if the heroes want to visit the Arkenstone's resting place, they must find their way to the Great Hall of Thráin and then the Tomb of Thorin Oakenshield. Otherwise, they will likely be heading for the Great Chamber of Thrór, the seat of the King under the Mountain.

Heroes sneaking around must make two series of prolonged action rolls... **Riddle** to find the way, and **Stealth** to avoid being noticed by the Dwarves of Erebor.

If a Dwarf companion can lead the company, then the **Riddle** rolls are not required. **Stealth** rolls are rolled against TN 12 (the halls of Erebor are still somewhat dark and many Dwarves are focused only on their own tasks).

If more than half the company fails any one **Stealth** roll then they have been spotted by the Stone Guard, who will escort them to Dwalin (see *The Stubborn Warrior*, above and Dwalin is predisposed against the heroes).

- It takes four successes to get from the Front Gate to the Great Chamber of Thrór; six successes to get from either the Front Gate or the Great Chamber to the Great Hall of Thráin. From a secret entrance four successes are required to get to the Great Hall, or six successes to get to the Great Chamber.

Companions might be wise enough to listen in to nearby Dwarven gossip. A hero that makes an **Awareness** roll with a great or extraordinary success has caught enough familiar words to know that the King is having a council at the Tomb of Thorin Oakenshield.

Breaking Free

Heroes that have been caught by the Stone Guard, and especially those who are being escorted to a holding area to wait upon King Dáin may chance to hear the raised voices of King Bard, Balin, Gandalf and King Dáin echoing by some chance of the stonework. Heroes that act quickly can momentarily break free from the guards (or find some way to allow themselves to be noticed by the assembled Great and Good).

To escape, a companion must succeed in a roll of **Athletics**. After a brief run, the hero is caught once again, but not before he is seen by Balin: with a wave of his hand the old Dwarf dismisses the Stone Guard. The heroes have made it in time to see the meeting of two powerful lords. But what words will pass between them?

- Part Six -
The Concert of Kings

King Bard and King Dáin are holding council in the Tomb of Thorin Oakenshield. Perhaps it was Gandalf who chose this meeting place, or it might have been Dáin in an attempt to remind Bard of the past that unites both kingdoms.

Dark Business

Thorin's mausoleum is a wide room, dominated by a large stone casket. The outer lid holds a large gemstone, cut in imitation of the original Arkenstone but without its inner fire: Dáin removed the original as soon as he received word from Gandalf of the Nazgûl's plans.

The chamber is at least fifty feet on a side. The high walls are carved with many reliefs, illustrating the ancestral history of the house of Durin. Above, high-set sconces flicker with an amber light. (See also *Erebor*, page 16).

The tomb is neither empty nor silent — King Bard, King Dáin, Balin and Gandalf can all be present based on how the events of the adventure unfolded, as well as a small crowd of courtiers and guards for each of the lords.

King Bard. Whether in wrath, or in the mood to make peace, as a monarch and once-staunch ally, King Bard was allowed entry to the Mountain. He may be extremely short-tempered having had to demand an audience and been kept waiting, or he may be back to his old noble self, intent on righting a wrong.

King Dáin. King Dáin is holding the Arkenstone, folded into his cloak: its radiant light pours from the fabric. Dáin's thoughts lie heavy with the burden of kingship—the Nazgûl have focused on the more easily corrupted Men of Dale and he has been caught off-guard by the severity of the threat he now faces.

Balin. The old Dwarf likely makes a reappearance. If the players are not great talkers, then Balin can be useful to unpack recent events, and set the record straight. He is still in a poor state from his earlier capture, and is in no shape to steal anyone's thunder in a battle. Though, as ever, his determination is undimmed.

The Grey Pilgrim. Gandalf may also be present. He is worried, for he fears that the power of a Ringwraith might prove too much for the rulers of the North. He will do what he can to spur the companions to prove themselves as heroes worthy of their fame.

Whether they meet in anger, yelling dire imprecations at one another, or if in a more reflective, remorseful mood, the company will come upon this scene at its height. Either the two kings are about to apologise to one another and renew their bonds of friendship, or declare outright war between the Kingdoms.

Bitter Words or Kind Deeds

The companions have their chance to resolve the differences that have marred the friendship between the two kings. Whether that comes from warning them of the imminent threat or reminding them of oaths spoken, the heroes can succeed in causing Dáin and Bard to put aside their quarrel.

If the events that transpired so far haven't really compromised seriously the bonds uniting the two kingdoms, then the heroes witness what is simply a heartwarming scene of two old companions rekindling a friendship that was almost lost.

Otherwise, the scene that unfolds in front of their eyes is a perfect example of how the Shadow corrupts the spirit of the Free Peoples from the inside, sowing fear and doubt in the minds of the weak and the mighty, turning brother against brother, friend against friend.

In both cases, the company has a chance to clear their reputation after the humiliation suffered during the trial, offering any new item of proof they might have gathered so far.

Just before things are about to conclude, with either Bard and Dáin about to come to physical blows, or to embrace as old friends, a deeper shadow darkens the chamber...

Enter the Nazgûl

An enemy unlike any other has come to the Mountain. From the crypts below the Tomb of Thorin, the Sorcerer of Forod enters the chamber. He has come to claim the Arkenstone, whether or not he succeeded in destroying the friendship between the two kings. The dark figure moves forward. Gandalf raises his staff as the companions prepare for battle. Any courtiers flee in utter terror.

When the companions start to think that with Gandalf at their side the odds aren't that bad, one, two, perhaps three or more Ringwraiths join the Sorcerer from the shadows. Clad in hooded black robes and bedecked with

the accoutrements of warrior-kings of old, they wield tarnished sword-blades, gleaming with a sickly light.

As the assembled characters gasp , the Sorcerer of Forod sweeps his pale hand across their number, casting a Dreadful Spell (see page 153). Then, the Ringwraiths shriek, their voice like that of ancient terror-birds of elder days, and rush towards Dáin and the Arkenstone, silvery corpse-hands grasping for the jewel. Dáin suddenly looks very small indeed.

For the conclusion of the adventure, the Loremaster can choose between the following two options: fight (see **A Desperate Battle** opposite) or flight.

The Final Confrontation

For heroes with a penchant for dramatic conclusions, a battle with the Ringwraiths in the Tomb of Thorin Oakenshield may be the most suitable ending to the adventure, if not to their entire adventuring career! More cautious heroes might prefer to focus on preventing the Nazgûl from achieving their nefarious objective and also live to see another day...

If they haven't realised yet that it's the Arkenstone that the Ringwraiths want, Gandalf spells it out for them: the voice of the Grey Wizard resounds clearly in their ears, as if Gandalf was speaking in their minds.

"They must not be allowed to claim the Arkenstone!" he says. *"But we can use their desire against them. Take the jewel to the Dawn Terrace!"* The companions receive a vision of a chamber high above them, with a great mechanism that tracks the motion of the Sun in the sky.

Gandalf raise up his staff and shouts out. *"Go back to the darkness! Flee, servants of Mordor!"* The Ringwraiths only laugh, but it is the moment that the Wizard needed. Bard and Balin draw their weapons and Dáin opens his cloak, revealing the Arkenstone. He nods to the companions and then tosses the priceless jewel to them.

"Take it and run! Keep safe the Heart of the Mountain!"

A Desperate Battle

Some heroes will not give way to the Nazgûl, no matter what Gandalf would wish. In this case, Dáin keeps the Arkenstone himself. The heroes must face all the other Ringwraiths first and only then will Morlach fall to Bard's sword and Balin's axe. The shade of the Sorcerer will depart for Mordor and it will be years before Sauron attempts to corrupt the Mountain again.

- Part Seven -
Flight into the Mountain

The following section covers the company's desperate journey through Erebor as they are pursued by the Nazgûl. From the Tomb of Thorin Oakenshield they will navigate through the Mountain, hopefully reaching the Dawn Terrace before the Ringwraiths catch them.

The Pursuit

Each time the heroes enter a new area, they will make a roll to navigate to their next destination. Even on a failed

roll, the heroes keep moving forward. There is no time to double-back, so they simply go a more circuitous route to their destination. But the enemy is close on their heels...

- If a Dwarf serves as a Guide, the navigation roll is a regular test of **Travel**. If another hero serves as Guide instead, a **Riddle** test at TN 18 is required instead.

Each location description gives two possible destinations, one if the roll is successful, the other if it is failed.

Lead Rating

At all times, the heroes have a Lead rating, which starts at 1. As long as the Lead does not reach zero, the companions are ahead of the Nazgûl. When the Lead reaches zero, the Ringwraiths have caught up. When that happens, the heroes must either redouble their efforts or face the enemy in battle.

The Lead rating of the company can be decreased by a bad decision, or a bad roll (see the various location descriptions below). On the other hand, other options may allow the companions to distance the pursuing wraiths.

- In one instance, one or more heroes can stay behind, buying time for the others. Each hero that chooses this option increases the Lead by one. However, their hero will face the combined might of the Nazgûl and are unlikely to survive the fight. (A kind Loremaster might subject such a hero to the Black Breath - see page 155, instead of slaying them outright.)

- The heroes might be able to interact with the environment to create distractions or obstacles for their pursuers. Each area below will note certain opportunities for the heroes to interact with the environment. (Note that Dáin will be understanding of some property damage, but putting innocents in danger is a Misdeed worthy of Shadow points.)

- The company could split up, with some of them going one way (the destination for a successful navigation check) and others going another way (the destination for a failed check). This increases Lead by one, but is only effective once.

- One of the prominent Loremaster characters (such as Dwalin, Balin, King Bard or someone else) could also interfere, adding to the company's Lead by one.

The Tomb of Thorin Oakenshield

The companions leave the mausoleum of the slain king, but which way do they head? This is their first navigation roll.

If they succeed, then they head into the crypts for a moment, only to turn aside soon afterwards. An open

arch leads to a stairwell. The companions hurry down the stairs. The stone steps are shallow and turn to the left every twenty paces or so. Soon the ceiling is uncomfortably close, and the tallest of the company must crouch down. The heroes then emerge on a long straight passageway. Following it, they emerge into a lower accessway that emerges into the *Heart of the Deeps* (see page 146).

If they fail, the company must simply flee to *The Great Hall of Thráin* (see below) outside the chamber.

The Great Hall of Thráin

This vast chamber used to be the lair of Smaug and there is still a feeling of unease in the dark corners of the huge room. Now with the Ringwraiths on their heels, the companions might feel like there is a lurking danger in every shadow. The Nazgûl shriek and the darkness seems to grow. Each companion must make a Fear test. Those who fail are Daunted and may not spend Hope for the remainder of the chase sequence.

If the Guide succeeds at the navigation roll, the company heads out one of the many passageways at the far end. They race past many workshops; surprised Dwarven artisans might glance up at the fleeing heroes, but are just as likely to stay focused on their tasks. Eventually, they come to a great circular chamber... the *Entrance to the Deeps* (see below).

If the roll is failed, then the companions are hard-pressed. They push open a sturdy stone door, perhaps hoping that they can wedge it shut afterwards. But now they are in the *Chamber of Mazarbul* (see opposite).

Entrance to the Deeps

Another vast chamber opens up inside the mountain, a great domed ceiling overhead. The room is circular and many, many passageways all meet here. Most of them slope down into the darkness, leading to various deeps. Several are flat, or slope slightly upwards. Most of those come to dead ends or sudden shafts that descend back into the lowest parts of Erebor. In the centre of the chamber, another passage spirals down into the darkness. A company foolish enough to follow it would find themselves soon enough in the *Heart of the Deeps* (see page 146).

A successful roll by the Guide allows them to choose the one passageway that leads to *The Great Causeway* (see page 148). But a failure means they spent too much time investigating the many corridors... **their Lead is reduced by 1**. Eventually they choose a promising passageway. There is warmth and the smell of iron down that tunnel. It leads to *The First Forge* (see page 146).

Chamber of Mazarbul

The great stone door opens onto a wide rectangular hall. The air here is dry, and dusty with age, for many ancient books and other manuscripts fill the chamber. This is the great library and storehouse of Dwarven knowledge in Erebor and the company has lead the Enemy here!

Munin is here, with a few other Dwarven scholars engaged in the processes of preservation, restoration and reproduction of treasured knowledge. At the heroes' approach, quills are laid down, ink is spilled and stools are knocked down. The scholars gasp in alarm. It is plain to the companions that simply fleeing the chamber invites the Nazgûl to slaughter the Dwarves as they stand.

The heroes must do something. For example:

- The heroes could knock over the shelves near the chamber entrance, doing much damage to many irreplaceable tomes in the process. This can either **add 1 to the company's Lead** or can give the scholars enough time to flee.

- The heroes can **sacrifice some of their Lead** (at least 1 point) to make sure all of the scholars get out of sight. There are small antechambers that lead to reading tables or copying desks where they can hide.

If Skirfira is present (see 67), she is brave enough to stand against the Nazgûl — a hero could toss her a weapon (and a shield would not go amiss). She will perish in the attempt, but if she knows it is to protect the Arkenstone then it is a good death. **This adds 1 to the company's Lead**.

One of the heroes instead could stay behind. The doorway itself is narrow and a single companion could hold it, even against a Ringwraith, for a little while.

Fleeing the scene and allowing the scholars to be slain is a Misdeed and each hero receives 3 Shadow points immediately.

As the heroes leave, the Guide must once again make a navigation roll. On *a success*, they've left the records room by a corridor that leads to *The Great Causeway* (see page 148). On *a failure* they flee into the heart of *Stángard* (see page 148).

The First Forge

The companions race into another large chamber, its air filled with the heat of smelting furnaces and echoes with the ringing of hammers, the shouts of Dwarven workers and the workings of various machinery. The heroes might have been here before, long ago, to foil Niping's treachery (see page 39). Due to those events, the furnaces are now well-patrolled by the Stone Guard and the company will be challenged soon after they enter the chamber.

If their Guide is a Dwarf or a Dwarven hero openly bears the Arkenstone, a few breathless words are all that is needed to allow the companions to pass unheeded and **gain 1 Lead**. Otherwise, the Guide must make a **Persuasion** roll. On a failure, precious time is lost explaining things and **the company's Lead is reduced by 1**. The heroes can now begin to navigate between the furnaces, smelters and cauldrons of molten metal.

Soon afterwards, the Ringwraiths enter. The brave members of the Stone Guard advance upon their foe, but the Sorcerer has other plans. He holds up his hand and the machinery of the forges stop. The room trembles, the furnaces flare brightly, the smelters smoke profusely and the cauldrons shiver in their holders. It is plain to see that flame and disaster are only moments away. The heroes must act!

- The heroes might remember from their previous visit that there are alarms in the chamber. It takes a successful **Athletics** roll to engage an Alarm. If at least three Alarms are tripped, the Dwarves receive enough warning to clear the chamber.

- Great cisterns of water rest above the furnaces. The company may **reduce their Lead by 1** in order to climb up and release their sluice gates. Water pours forth and a great steam arises! It is a ruinous outcome for the forges, but it will save the smiths.

- A hero could challenge the Sorcerer in order to disrupt his dark magic. The Stone Guard will assist, but the Nazgûl are a foe beyond them and the companion will soon face the full wrath of the Ringwraiths alone.

If the company simply flees, then some surviving Dwarves are able to open the channels and flood the chamber in order to prevent the fire from spreading. But the loss of life is grievous. This outcome is worth an immediate gain of 3 Shadow points.

If the Guide succeeds at the navigation roll, they are able to take one of the upper exits that leads to *The Great Causeway*. *On a failure,* the heroes are forced to follow the only way they know... they charge down a corridor that leads to *Niping's Fissure* (see page 149).

The secret passage is now patrolled by the Stone Guard against another incursion, but they will scatter as the

heroes charge out of the mountain, the Ringwraiths at their heels.

Heart of the Deeps

The companions follow a passageway to the great central shaft that forms the heart of the deeps. A stone span serves as a bridge over the yawning darkness, gently sloping up to another passageway that opens on the opposite side of the gulf. There are no handrails, guide ropes or other safety features. Looking down into the chasm, they can only see darkness and the faintest signs of other stone-bridges that cross the yawning deep. Above, the heroes can see the shadows of spans that cross above them.

From below, the heroes can hear echoing sounds of rock grinding against rock. Above, they chance to see a shadow moving on a span a hundred feet above them. The Ringwraith cries out, but it does not seem to be meant for the company. Instead, from below there are answering echoes and the sounds of moving stones. The Stalker in the Deeps is coming!

The Nazgûl does not descend, knowing that the Stalker in the Deeps will not discriminate between friend and foe in its rage. Instead, it waits above for either the creature to destroy the heroes, or for a weakened company to stagger upward.

Quick Thinking and Quicker Action

Heroes that are fast on their feet might choose to collapse the tunnel that houses the Stalker. To do so, they must destroy at least three support beams. It takes 15 points of damage to destroy a beam, but an Axe that produces a Piercing Blow or the Break Shield called shot can break the wooden support in a single blow.

Heroes that collapse the tunnel in a single round of blows gain 1 Lead. The Nazgûl were not expecting such an immediate reaction.

The Stalker in the Deeps

Among the Dwarves who explore the deepest tunnels, there are legends of a silent killer who waits in the oldest and darkest places of the Mountain. Those who claim to have encountered it and survived speak of a huge mouth full of poison fangs surrounded by a snake-like head with a crown of darkened bone. But it is larger than any serpent that slithers in the grass...

Attribute Level	
6	
Endurance	Hate
50	6
Parry	Armour
2	4d
Skills	
Personality, 1	Survival, 2
Movement, 3	Custom, 1
Perception, 2	Vocation, 1
Weapon Skills	
Bite	3
Swallow	1
Special Abilities	
Hideous Toughness	Great Size
Savage Assault	-

Weapons:

Weapon Type	Damage	Edge	Injury	Called Shot
Bite	8	10	16	Poison*
Swallow**	0		16	-

* If the Stalker makes a called shot with its Bite attack, it injects the victim with a powerful venom that causes confusion. For the next day, the victim must roll two Feat dice and take the worse result for any common skill rolls.

** A swallowed companion must make a Protection test against the powerful stomach acids on each of the Stalker's next turns, until the Stalker is slain or the companion has become unconscious.

Once the heroes have dealt with the Stalker, they can begin to climb their way out of the Deeps. Making progress requires one to cross a span, work your way upwards along the edge of the shaft and cross another shaft to reach another higher passage. Heroes who spend enough time here can gain the top of the shaft and reach the *Entrance to the Deeps* (see page 145). **Reduce the company's Lead by 1** if they choose this route.

A Guide that succeeds at their navigation roll is able to instead find a shaft that leads to *The First Forge* (see above) instead. *On a failure*, the company must instead climb up to the entrance, as above.

The Great Causeway

This long passageway is one of the primary ways the Dwarves of Erebor move their great works through the mountain. Thus it is wider and taller than most corridors and is joined by many tributaries on its course. At any time, day or night, there is traffic on the causeway – workers finished with their shift heading home (with perhaps a stop or two along the way), others just beginning their day, great slabs of raw marble or other stone being moved to a workroom, wagons of ore destined for the furnaces, carts of finished ironwork going to the Front Gate and many more besides.

When the Nazgûl appear, they will cause panic on the road. But oftentimes there is too much traffic for fleeing to be practical. The heroes might elect to overturn carts or cut the lashes on loads in order to block the Causeway. Each member of the company must make an **Athletics** roll. With a total of five or more successes, the heroes have blocked enough of the Causeway that the Ringwraiths must follow using smaller passages that are rarely trafficked and thereby gain **1 Lead**. Otherwise, the company **can spend 1 Lead** to make another roll. Fleeing outright without at least attempting to block the Causeway is worth 3 or more Shadow points.

If the Guide's navigational roll is successful, they can reach the short passageway to *Glóin's Ladder* (see opposite). *On a failure*, they take a wrong turn and find one of the staircases leading to *Stángard* (see below).

Stángard

The passageway the companions have been following intercepts a broad set of stairs. Racing up them, the heroes find themselves amidst the many alleyways that lead to private abodes of Dwarves. The company is in Stángard, the living quarters of Erebor. As long as the heroes keep to the main stairs heading to the town centre, the Dwarves living along this spur of the city have little to fear from the Nazgûl.

Once the companions have reached the main square, they have a few choices to make.

- The most responsible thing to do is ring the Bell of Stángard. A gift from Dale in more trusting days, its purpose is to warn those Dwarves in the city of danger. It is in the very centre of the town and reaching it **reduces the company's Lead by 2**.

- The heroes can try and find the Iron Guard to raise the alarm. The staunch members of Dáin's personal bodyguard can stand against the assault of the Ringwraiths but they will fall eventually. A roll of **Persuade** or **Battle** is necessary to make the Dwarven warriors understand the threat. If successful, the heroes **add 1 to their Lead**.

- Simply continuing to flee means that the heroes are now leading the Nazgûl through the common areas of Stángard, where there are many shops, taverns and storehouses. They are certain to encounter unarmed

Dwarves of all ages and the Ringwraiths will cause them much panic and terror in their pursuit. Each companion gains at least 5 points of Shadow if they simply run but gain **1 Lead**.

If the Guide succeeds at the navigation roll, then the company heads unerringly for the passageway that leads to *Glóin's Ladder* (see below). *On a failure*, they must stop and ask for directions... the Ladder is the only way to the Dawn Terrace. **Reduce the company's Lead by 1** in this case, but the heroes will still reach the Ladder.

Glóin's Ladder

This steep staircase is named after the son of Thorin the First who, before the folk of Erebor ventured to the Grey Mountains, carved it to gain access to the upper reaches of the mountain. It winds its way upwards in a tight spiral and its tall steps are another proof that it was a young Dwarf who planned such an ambitious undertaking.

These days it is rarely used, although it leads to places such as the Ice Terrace (see *Erebor*, page 17), the access corridors for the towers of Thráin and to the Dawn Terrace (see below). Once the heroes are on the Ladder, there is nothing left to do but climb. Each companion must make an **Athletics** roll.

If the number of failures outweighs the number of successes then **the company's Lead is reduced** by the difference between the number of failures to successes. If the Nazgûl catch up to the heroes on the Ladder, even a single companion can hold them off for a long time on the narrow staircase. Conversely, if the heroes have more successes then they can choose to gain a point of Fatigue. If all the heroes do so, then **their Lead increases by 1**.

After an exhausting climb, the company reaches *The Dawn Terrace* (see overleaf).

Niping's Fissure

The company perhaps retraces their steps that they once took with Gunvar and his men when the traitorous lord attacked Erebor. They once again (or perhaps for the first time) must cross the stone bridge over a seemingly bottomless chasm. Each hero must make a Fear test or become Daunted (see *The One Ring*, page 146). They then must once again scramble past razor-edged rocks, vents of acrid gas, slippery rocks and the cramped conditions of the long and twisting passage. Each hero must make an **Athletics** test or lose a Success die worth of Endurance points.

Finally, the companions come to the actual fissure. It is narrow and getting out of it is harder than clambering down. Each hero must make another roll of **Athletics**. On a failure, the companion slips and has a hard landing, gaining a point of Fatigue. A hero that gets a great or extraordinary success can choose to take on a point of Fatigue to catch a companion and prevent them from becoming hurt instead.

Once outside, the company finds itself in the narrow valley of Niping's fissure. It is gloomy here and the Sun is yet low on the horizon and ragged clouds gather in the East. The Nazgûl come, and they will not be easily daunted, even by the Arkenstone.

The Battle of the Fissure

The Ringwraiths advance, and there is nowhere left for the heroes to flee. They have not reached their intended location, but at least they are outside and the Sun is rising, however slowly.

The battle is divided into three phases, dependant on the amount of light available. The hero holding the heart of the Mountain can reveal it as a combat action (instead of attacking). The impact of the stone depends on the amount of sunlight available.

- For the first three rounds, no light from the rising Sun reaches the shaded valley. If a companion wields the Arkenstone, any Nazgûl attacks against that hero are *moderately hindered*.

- For the next three rounds, only the slightest glimmer reaches the valley, but it is enough to set the Heart of the Mountain aflame! If a member of the company wields the stone, then every companion that shares that hero's stance also gains the benefit of the Arkenstone (as above).

- During the last three rounds, day has come again. If a hero wields the Arkenstone it gleams with a brilliance that few can withstand. Each Nazgûl is *severely hindered* in this case. If the Nazgûl have not stolen the gem by the end of these three rounds, they forgo their black robes and flee, thin shadows in the light of the Sun.

The Arkenstone is lost!

If the company does battle with the Nazgûl inside Erebor or at Niping's Fissure, there's a chance that the Sorcerer's plan will come to fruition and the Ringwraiths will depart Erebor in possession of the Arkenstone. If that happens, there may be some ways to keep your game within the lore that we know from the Tale of Years.

Foremost, the Nazgûl are loathe to cross running water. This means that they are likely headed for the bridge of Celduin (*see Tales from Wilderland*, page 125 and on) and could be intercepted there. This gives the surviving heroes another chance at fighting the Nazgûl and a plausible way to recover the Arkenstone.

A less satisfactory resolution could be that Gandalf reveals that the companions have been carrying a decoy the entire time, its glow provided by a little magic of his own making. While frustrating, it does keep the true Arkenstone in Thorin's tomb for all time.

The Dawn Terrace

The companions exit the steep staircase and race eastwards along a newly carved passageway. It opens into a semicircular room, the ceiling and walls of which are a singular dome that disappears into a series of gears and stone pinions that trace the border of the room.

The wall has one small slit in it. This is the Dawn Terrace, a newly constructed chamber that will allow the Dwarves to capture the first rays of any given morning for use in their wondrous devices. But today, Gandalf's plan is to harness the dawn light of the Sun and amplify the natural power of the Arkenstone.

The Wizard is not here yet, and surely the Nazgûl are not far behind.

- It will take six combat rounds for dawn to come. For each point of Lead remaining, that round passes uneventfully. Once the Lead reaches 0, the Nazgûl emerge into the chamber. A cold wind extinguishes all sources of light. Until the sun rises at the beginning of the seventh round, the heroes will be *severely hindered* by the darkness. A hero with a torch can give up their attack in order to relight it.

Dawn Breaks

On the seventh round, a thin ray of the Sun's light comes through the slit in the wall. If the hero bearing the Arkenstone places it within the beam then the gem flares and the entire chamber is illuminated by light too brilliant for mortal eyes! No-one can take any actions other than to shield their eyes from the glowing stone.

After a moment, the flare subsides to the light of a brightly burning bonfire. There is no sign of the Nazgûl. Gandalf will later explain that they have not been destroyed, but the magic binding their dread wills to unseen sinews was disrupted and it will be a long time before they are seen again in the North.

– Epilogue –

The Sorcerer's plot to steal the Arkenstone and plunge the Lonely Mountain and Dale into war with each other has failed. Both King Bard and King Dáin thank the heroes for preventing disaster – there are still dark times ahead (especially for Bard) but today is a day of victory!

The Arkenstone is restored to its rightful place in the Tomb of Thorin Oakenshield. The two kings swear new oaths of friendship and loyalty over his grave, so that the Shadow will have no hope of setting them against each other again.

If members of the company or their allies fell in battle against the Nazgûl then their bodies are recovered.

Dwarves will be laid to rest in a place of honour in the crypts of the Mountain, others might be laid to rest in Dale's cemetery.

The company are fêted as heroes and they are given the freedom of both Erebor and Dale, meaning they gain the standard of living of a Dwarf of Erebor, their basic needs now being met without question in high style for the rest of their lives. Heroes that petition for a title from King Bard may find themselves well-rewarded... the King knows that he needs new advisors that will not succumb to the Enemy. They may also choose a holding in either city, if they wish.

The Smiths of Erebor labour long hours over the coming year, and King Bard opens the armoury of Girion. As a just reward the companions are gifted unique weapons suited to their individual abilities. (The Loremaster may fashion such weapons using the rules for Magical Treasure found in *Rivendell*, page 85.)

A statue of Thegn Jofur is raised in the Commons. A statue of Balin is raised in Erebor. These require special stone from the Iron Hills, and precious metals found only in the Mountains of Mirkwood. If they are not ready to retire, the companions might choose to lead in their acquisition.

Lord Hakon flees Dale when he hears of events in Erebor, taking a small body of loyal troops and a brace of chests of Bard's gold. Precisely what becomes of the corrupt nobleman of Dale is another story...

The Nazgûl are sorely punished by their master, stripped of their robes and forced to wander formless in agony for long decades before being allowed back into His favour. Eventually Sauron sends his Messenger back to Erebor to attempt to treat with Dáin, who recognises an old enemy and rebuffs him.

If, by some chance, the Arkenstone has been permanently lost then the mood of the two kings is much more dour. They still swear oaths of loyalty to each other, but it has become evident to both of them that few of their subjects are able to stand against the Shadow.

- appendix -
the nazgûl of the north

Nine (rings) he gave to Mortal Men, proud and great, and so ensnared them. Long ago they fell under the dominion of the One, and they became Ringwraiths, shadows under his great Shadow, his most terrible servants.

In *The Laughter of Dragons,* the evil that befalls both Dale and Erebor can be traced to the Sorcerer of Forod, one of the nine Ringwraiths — the chief and most powerful servants of Sauron, the Great Enemy.

In the years after the capture of Dol Guldur and the restoration of Barad-dûr, the Dark Lord is still bent on reclaiming his ancient power. As their fate is tied to that of their Master, the power of the Ringwraiths is yet pale if compared to what the Nine will become years later, when the Lord of the Rings will send them to hunt for the One Ring.

In gaming terms, this lesser stature is reflected by the Sorcerer of Forod's Attribute level: a relatively low value – even if at night it is doubled by its Denizen of the Dark ability. Yet, this value is higher than that of the Nazgûl of Dol Guldur as presented in the Darkening of Mirkwood. This is due to the solitary nature and importance of the Sorcerer's mission in the eye of the Dark Lord.

The Sorcerer of Forod

In life, Morlach was a tall and noble Northman, whose ambition pushed him too far. His mortal legacy is forgotten, as everything concerning him has been lost from the tale of years. Only a few among the Elves of Mirkwood remember how he was caught by his folk committing forbidden acts of necromancy, and how he was blinded with hot irons and sent away into the Forest of Mirkwood, to die as an outcast. Found by servants of Sauron sent to search for him, Morlach became another lethal weapon in the hand of his saviour, the Dark Lord.

Now Sauron has unleashed Morlach once again. The Sorcerer moves subtly, setting one lord against another, to destroy hope and friendship and leave only bitterness and grief in his wake. He usually appears in the shadows, Unclad and Invisible, whispering words of treachery to his thralls. But when he takes shape as a Dark Undead he is as deadly as he is terrifying.

The Sorcerer as Dark Undead

Morlach appears as a tall robed and hooded figure, wearing a helm with a full visor, without slits for eyes (for Morlach was eyeless when still mortal). When confronting enemies in combat, the air about the Ringwraith flickers with black fire.

- If engaged in combat, the Sorcerer of Forod suffers damage normally, but is not defeated when reduced to 0 Endurance. Instead, Morlach loses half his current Hate and becomes Craven (he flees if reduced to 0 Hate).

- The Sorcerer cannot be Wounded except by weapons especially wound with spells for the bane of Mordor. Also, he is not defeated if Wounded once. If the Sorcerer is both wounded and reduced to 0 Endurance he vanishes with a shrill wailing.

The Sorcerer when Unclad and Invisible

When unclad, the Sorcerer of Forod is completely invisible but his presence can be perceived as a gust of cold air or a sudden chill, and an ominous feeling, as if something terrible is about to happen.

- When forced to make a Fear test in the presence of an invisible Sorcerer, a companion rolls the Feat die twice and keeps the worst result.

The Sorcerer cannot attack or be attacked physically when invisible, but may target enemies using other special abilities (the stats corresponding to weapon attacks and special abilities requiring a physical form are ignored when Morlach is unclad).

Powers of the Sorcerer of Forod

Black Breath
Deadly Voice
Denizen of the Dark
Dreadful Spells (see below)
Thing of Terror*

Only as Dark Undead
Bewilder
Dwimmerlaik
Fear of Fire
Fell Speed
Savage Assault

*The TN for all Fear tests provoked by the Sorcerer is equal to 16, plus 1 for every additional Ringwraith present.

Dreadful Spells of the Sorcerer of Forod

In addition to the weapons and the powers dark and terrible possessed by all Ringwraiths (see page 155), the Sorcerer of Forod has been bestowed with powerful spells for the enslavement of the folk of the North.

When Morlach uses Dreadful Spells, the Loremaster chooses between the *Terror of Desire* or the *Shadow of Fear* (see page 156. Note that the *Shadow of Fear* spell is especially appropriate for Loremaster's characters). The TN of all Corruption tests is 16.

Terror of Desire: All heroes are caught up in the fantasy of their Shadow Weakness, and must struggle to break free. At the start of each round, the heroes must roll the Feat die once, plus one time for each Flaw a companion has developed due to degeneration (see *The One Ring Roleplaying Game*, page 226). A companion must keep rolling until the Feat die results in a ᚠ and the hero breaks free of the ensorcellment, or until an 👁 is rolled, in which case the companion suffers a Bout of Madness, and cannot take any other actions until it ends and he passes a Wisdom test to recover.

The Morgul-knife

"Alas! the wounds of this weapon are beyond my skill to heal."

The Sorcerer of Forod carries a Morgul-knife, the mark of the trust of his Lord and of the importance of his task.

Enemies of the Nazgûl who die when pierced by a Morgul- knife do not rest, but become Fell Wraiths under the dominion of the Dark Lord (see *Rivendell*, page 79). If a companion is Wounded, his injury must be treated by a master of healing like Elrond Halfelven as soon as possible.

If this does not happen, the victim becomes sick and does not recover, and will soon be overcome: the wounded hero resists for a number of days equal to 10 plus the victim's favoured Heart rating, then if he is still without cure he dies in pain, only to rise later as a Fell Wraith.

But a Morgul-wound will never truly heal. A hero who sustained such a grim injury feels a great chill spreading from the spot where he was pierced whenever he is traversing an area considered Blighted, or finds himself

in sight of a Ringwraith: the companion must pass one Corruption test (TN 20) or be made Weary by the throbbing pain (he remains Weary as long as he remains in the cursed area, or in the presence of the Nazgûl).

Moreover, the pain will return every year on the day the character received the Morgul-wound, and the companion will have to pass a Corruption test (TN 20), or gain a number of Shadow points equal to the Attribute level of the enemy who dealt him the fateful blow.

There is only one positive side for those who survive a Morgul-wound: his senses become sharper, and he is more aware of things that cannot be seen. For example, the companion can see more in the dark than most, including Dwarves and Elves. In game terms, all his Perception skill rolls are considered to enjoy a bonus equal to his current Shadow score.

The Morgul-knife

Weapon type	Damage	Edge	Injury	Called Shot
Morgul-knife	4		20	Pierce

The Sorcerer of Forod

Attribute Level	
6	
Endurance	**Hate**
70	12
Parry	**Armour**
8	2d
Skills	
Personality, 3	Survival, 3
Movement, 3	Custom, 4
Perception, 3	Vocation, 3
Weapon Skills	
Long Sword	3
Claw	3
Morgul-Knife	3
Special Abilities	
See description above.	

More Nazgûl

A climatic scene featured in the adventure *Shadows in the North* (page 142) can see the Sorcerer of Mirkwood make an appearance, accompanied by a number of Ringwraiths. In that occasion, it is left to the Loremaster to judge how many Nazgûl will enter the fray, based on the composition and heroic stature of the company of heroes, but also on the players' attitude towards combat: it is not the aim of the scene to wipe out the entire fellowship, but to confront them with a challenge that will seriously make them consider escaping.

The Loremaster is free to use the stats for the Nazgûl of Dol Guldur contained in the supplement *The Darkening of Mirkwood*, or the generic ones described below (The Lord of the Nazgûl should not make an appearance under any circumstance, to avoid taking the spotlight away from the Sorcerer of Forod).

All Ringwraiths as Dark Undead or when Unclad and Invisible follow the same rules detailed for the Sorcerer of Forod on page 152.

Special Abilities of the Ringwraiths

All Nazgûl employ the special abilities and weapons listed here.

Powers of the Ringwraiths

Black Breath
Deadly Voice
Denizen of the Dark
Dreadful Spells: the Shadow of Fear
Thing of Terror*

Only as Dark Undead

Dwimmerlaik
Fear of Fire
Savage Assault

*The TN for all Fear tests provoked by the Nazgûl is equal to 10 plus the Attribute level of the most powerful among them, adding 1 for every additional Ringwraith present.

Weapons of the Ringwraiths

Weapon type	Damage	Edge	Injury	Called Shot
Long sword	7 (1h) 9 (2h)	9	16 (1h) 18 (2h)	Disarm
Claw	Att. Level		16	-

Long sword: The Ringwraiths wield their sword of steel with one hand when they want to claw at their opponent employing their Savage Assault ability. Otherwise, they swing their long swords with both hands.

The Nazgûl

Attribute Level	
4	
Endurance	Hate
50	10
Parry	Armour
6	2d
Skills	
Personality, 2	Survival, 3
Movement, 3	Custom, 2
Perception, 3	Vocation, 3
Weapon Skills	
Long Sword	3
Claw	2
Special Abilities	
See description above.	

Special Abilities of the Ringwraiths

The Ringwraiths have a fearsome arsenal of uncanny powers to employ against those who dare come between them and their prey.

Black Breath

Anyone who comes near the Nazgûl must immediately make a Corruption test. The TN is equal to 10 plus the Attribute level of the most powerful Nazgûl, adding 1 for every additional Ringwraith present. A companion who fails the roll gains a Shadow point and falls unconscious.

A successful **Healing** roll revives the character. Upon awakening, the character is confused and is temporarily Miserable until able to rest for a prolonged time. If the Corruption test fails with an then the companion has been stricken by the Black Shadow (see box on page 156). A Ringwraith can force a companion to make a new Corruption test for the Black Breath by reducing its Hate score by one point.

Deadly Voice

The Ringwraiths scream at their enemies with long-drawn wails that rise to a deafeningly high piercing note. Reduce the creature's Hate point score by one to make a companion who failed a Fear test and thus was daunted

to additionally become temporarily weary. The effect ends when the companions leave the presence of the Nazgûl.

Dreadful Spells: Shadow of Fear

The Ringwraiths may lay this spell upon a Man, Hobbit or Dwarf to make them agents for the Shadow. A Nazgûl may employ the spell multiple times to seed a region he has set his aim upon with spies and informants. The spell lasts for up to a number of weeks equal to the highest Attribute level among the Ringwraiths facing the victim. A spellbound agent tries to accomplish what the Ringwraith commanded him to do out of great fear (usually to report information or to carry out a single task) but is generally loathe to do it or is otherwise nervous about it.

A victim of the Shadow of Fear can be snapped out of the spell with an **Awe** roll or another Personality skill appropriate to the situation, but only if the roll results in a great or extraordinary success. The TN to break the spell is equal to 16 (10 plus the Attribute level of the Sorcerer of Forod).

Dwimmerlaik

A companion who hits a Ringwraith for a Piercing blow using a close combat weapon must immediately make a Valour test: if the roll fails, the weapon used to strike the Nazgûl breaks into many shards, and the hero loses a number of Endurance points equal to the Attribute level of the Ringwraith he attacked. Additionally, the character is considered to have been exposed to the Black Breath. Note that a Piercing blow scored using a normal weapon cannot wound a Ringwraith. A famous weapon might not shatter, but is lost as the hero's hands go numb and cold.

The Black Shadow

A victim of the Black Shadow remains unconscious for a number of days equal to the Attribute level of the highest-rated Ringwraith the character faced when he was exposed to the Black Breath. For each of these days, the sick character must pass a Corruption test against TN 16 or gain a point of Shadow; reduce the TN to 14 if the hero is assisted with a successful Healing roll.

Should a stricken hero's Shadow rating overcome his Hope score during the malady, then the character slips into ever deeper dreams and then dies. If the hero resists for the length of the malady, he finally overcomes his sickness and wakes up (but maintains the new Shadow score).

- Index -

Appendix - The Nazgûl of the North **152**
Black Breath 155
(The) Black Shadow 156
Dreadful Spells of the Sorcerer of Forod 153
Deadly Voice 155
Dreadful Spells: Shadow of Fear 156
Dwimmerlaik 156
(The) Morgul-knife 153, 154
(More) Nazgûl 154
(The) Nazgûl 155
Powers of the Sorcerer of Forod 153
(The) Sorcerer of Forod 152, 154
(The) Sorcerer as Dark Undead 152
(The) Sorcerer when Unclad and Invisible 152
Special Abilities of the Ringwraiths 154, 155
Terror of Desire 153
Weapons of the Ringwraiths 155

Dark Waters **96**
Adventuring Phase 96
Aefre 101
Aefre and Eutaric 104
Back at the Inn 104
Black Treachery 115
(The) Completion of the Statue 117
Clouds and Storms 98
(A) Cold Welcome 109
(A) Dark Conscience 107
(The) Emissary 110
Entering the Guild House 106
Epilogue - The Past is Never That 117
Escaping the Cages Underwater 115
(Is) Eutaric the Villain? 106
Eutaric of Woodland Hall 101
Evaluating the Outcome 108, 114
(The) Flight Up to Lake-town 117
(The) Glittering Gate 110
(The) Guardian 111
(The) Guttermaw 104, 111, 116
Haldis 100
Meeting Haldis 111
Holti, Antique Dealer 100, 105
Interaction 102, 107, 114
Introduction 102, 107, 113
It is Safer Indoors 98
Lair of the Mud-men 112
Lake-town Down Under 112
Later into the Night 101
Linnon, the Renegade 113
Magan, Apprentice to Orsmid 99
Magan's Help 103
Many Years Later 97
(The) Monster 115
(The) Mornamir 116
(The) 'Mud-men' 112, 115
Nefgeir, the Innkeeper 99, 104
Nefgeir the Witness 104
Old Enemies 113
Orsmid, Metalworker 99, 114
Part Five - Elf-stones and Dwarven Gold 109
Part Four - The Guild of Artisans 106
Part One - At the Sign of the Pike and Eel 97
Part Seven - Flotsam and Jetsam 114
Part Six - Whispers in the Dark 111
Part Three - Tales, Secrets and Lies 104
Part Two - The Apprentice 101
Past Lives 96
(The) Power of the Elvenking 110
Recovering the Mornamir 115
Resolution 103
Set Tolerance 102, 107, 113
Silvan Elf Emissary 110
Silvan Elf Sentinel 110
(The) Statue 97
What do the Companions know about that Night? 102
What Now? 109
What Really Happened? 109
(The) Young Disciple 102

Introduction **4**
Balin, Son of Fundin 6
Hakon and Jofur 6
How to Use This Guide 5
Lord Hakon 6
(The) Passing of Years 6
(The) Sorcerer of Forod 5
Thegn Jofur 6

Of Hammers and Anvils **24**
(The) Abyss 39
Adventuring Phase 24
Back to Balin 35
Balin 26
Balin's Counterplan 39
Before the King 42
(The) Boat 25
Bryni, Lord of Strandburg 34
(The) Companions Play Dumb 37
(The) Company is Imprisoned 37
Dark Business 29
Dark Tidings 27
(The) Doom of Niping the Smith 24
(The) Dorwinion Connection 33
(An) Encounter over Dinner 36
Epilogue 42
(To) Erebor 38
Fighting Gunvar in the Forges 40
(The) First Forge 39
Gunvar, Lord of Ashbrook 34
Gunvar's Bodyguards 41
Gunvar's Men-at-Arms 41
Gunvar's Offer 37
Gwion 33
Halward 32
Helping the Toymaker 28
Into the Depths 38
Investigating the Boat 32
Lord Gunvar 36
(The) Mechanical Messenger 38
Meeting Katun 33
(The) Missing Scale 34
Niping Exposed! 42
Niping's Schemes 25
No Proof! 42
Off to Ashbrook 36
Part Five - In Deep Places 38
Part Four - An Interested Lord 35
Part One - Like the Falling of Small Stones 25
Part Six - Treachery & Wisdom 41
Part Three - Uphill and Down Dale 29
Part Two - A Grim Toy-market 27
Questions, Questions 29
(The) Raven 26
(The) Raven, Again 29
(The) Red Livery 34
Sabotage! 39
Seeking Thrun 28
Sounding the Alarms 40
(The) Speech 36
(The) Task 30
Thegn Osgar 34
Thrun as an Informer 31
Thrun the Toymaker 32
Thrun's Marvellous Thrush 32
(The) Toy Workshop 30
(The) Toymaker's Tale 30
(An) Uneasy Alliance 37
What if the Company Refuses? 35
Where is Niping? 31
Words on the Road 27

Shadows in the North **118**
Across the Upper Marches 121
Adventuring Phase 118
(An) Ancient Enemy 124
Anvil Way (Thrun's Workshop) 135
(The) Arkenstone is lost! 150
At the Gate 127

Balin's House 118
(The) Battle of the Fissure 149
Bitter Words or Kind Deeds 142
Bones and Curses 123
Breaking Free 141
Brokenstone 136
Chamber of Mazarbul 145
Cold Wind From the East 122
The Commons (Katun) 137
(The) Company Remains 133
(The) Conspirators' Masterstroke 130
Dark Business 141
Dark Passages 124
Dawn Breaks 150
(The) Dawn Terrace 150
(A) Deceiving Plot 120
(The) Descent 123
(A) Desperate Battle 143
(The) Devourer 125
Elstan's Cottage 138
Enter the Nazgûl 142
Entering Erebor 139
Entrance to the Deeps 145
Epilogue 150
Escape? 132
Exile from Dale 133
Fight 128
Fight or be Eaten 125
(The) Final Confrontation 143
Finding the Way 140
(Using) Fireworks in Battle 136
(The) First Forge 146
Flight 127
(The) Front Gate 139
Gathering Supplies and Rumours 121
Glóin's Ladder 149
(The) Goblin Camp 123
(The) Great Causeway 147
(The) Great Hall of Thráin 145
Heart of the Deeps 147
Hidden Holes 121
(The) Howling in the Night 121
Huge Dead Wings 124
Interaction 130, 140
Into the Netherwood 122
Introduction 130, 140
Jofur's Plea 131
(The) Judgement 131
Lead Rating 144
(The) Litany of Charges 129
(The) Mark of the Wandering Wizard 119
(The) Nazgûl Watches 130
(The) Need for Stealth 135
(The) Nether Marches 122
Niping's Fissure 149
Part Five - Inside Information 139
Part Four - The City of Bells 134
Part One - Expected Visitors 118
Part Seven - Flight into the Mountain 143
Part Six - The Concert of Kings 141
Part Three - A Warm Welcome 127
Part Two - The Vale of Bones 120
(The) Pits 132
Possible Outcome 140
(The) Pursuit 143
(The) Quays (Balin's house) 138
Quick Thinking and Quicker Action 147
Ravenous Goblins 126
Residential Quarter (Domi) 137
(The) Royal Palace (King Bard) 138
Rumours in the City 135
(A) Secret Entrance 139
Setting Tolerance 130
(The) Shadow of the North 132
(The) Skull Piles 124
Sneaking in the Front Door 139
Stolen Game 122
Straight to Erebor 134
Stángard 148
(The) Stalker in the Deeps 147
(The) Stubborn Warrior 140
Surrender 127
Taking Stock 134
Thrun's Tragic Termination 130
(The) Tomb of Thorin Oakenshield 144
(The) Trial 128
(The) Way Out 133
(A) Wizard Unlooked For 126
Wolf of the Waste 122

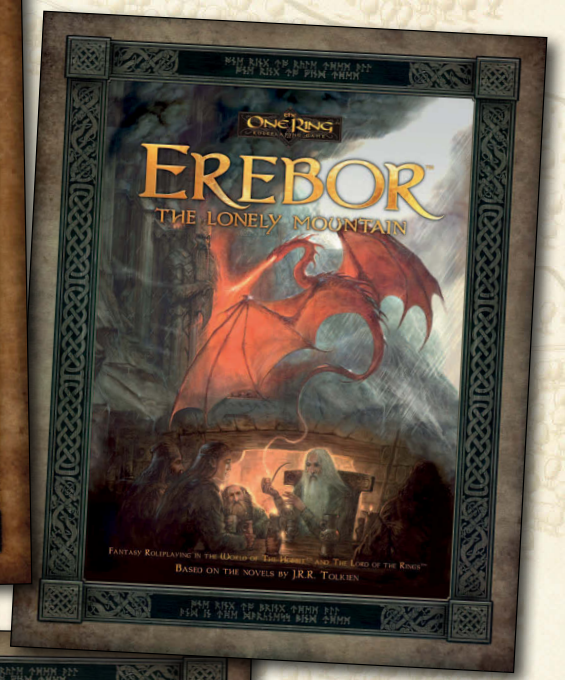
(The) Silver Needle 7
Adventuring Phase 7
Aftermath 10
Ambush! 14
(The) Barracks 20
(The) Black Scabbard 12
(The) City Guards 9
Clovis – A Hobbit 9
(The) Cold Bog 14
(The) Companions Return 16
(The) Craftswoman's Fate 16
Denouncing Longo to King Bard 19
Enter Lord Hakon 19
Epilogue 23
Faces in the Crowd 9
(The) Final Confrontation 22
Finding the Camp 14
(The) Gate is Shut 8
(The) Gate Opens 11
Hidden in Plain Sight 11
Idle Chatter 10
Is the Adventure Over? 20
Kasper and Swain 17
Katun – Merchant of the Easterlings 9
Kelda – Old Craftswoman 9
King Bard in 2957 19
Longo 22
Longo's Lair 20
Longo's Lieutenants 15, 23
Longo's Plan 13
Looking For Kelda 16
Muddy Sword-work 15
(A) Mystery Revealed 15
Of Relics and Needles 7
On the Right Path 13
(The) Orcs of Dol Guldur 14
Part Four - The Bandit's Lair 19
Part One - At the Traders Gate 7
Part Three - Thieves in Dale 16
Part Two - Searching the Roads 13
Patience 8
Playing Hakon 19
Playing the Investigation 18
Return to Dale 15
(The) Scuffle 10
Searching 20
Searching For Longo 18
(The) Shadows of Brokenstone 20
(The) Silver Needle 16
Smashing Down the Doors 20
Sneaking along the Tunnel 21
Taking the Bait, or Not? 12
Thulim, Nephew of Dulin 9
Tipping off Longo 18
Vig, the Spy 17
Waiting, Waiting... 8
What About the Black Scabbard? 23

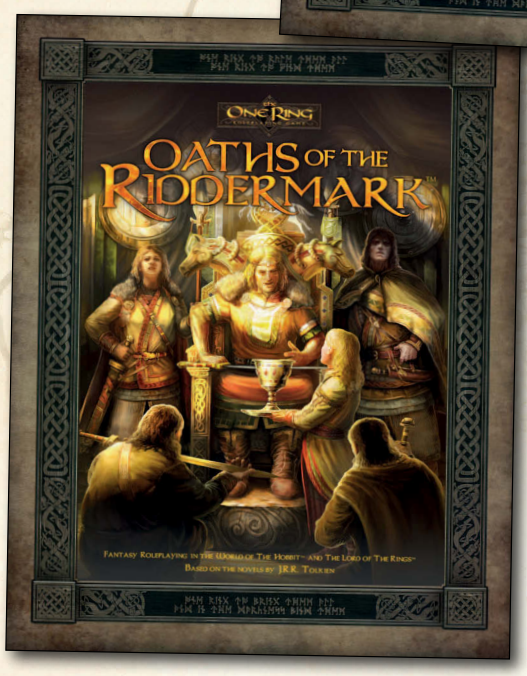
Sleeping Dragons Lie 64
Adventuring Phase 64
(The) Aegis of Dale 78
After a Hunt 69
After the Battle 78
Ambushing the Orcs 87
Ash Cloud 80
Attack By Night 76
Avoiding Brech 74
(The) Battle of Brech 76
Battling the Orcs 87
Birds in an Empty Sky 80
Brech 73
(The) Brothers Khuldrim 67, 78

(The) Burnt Orc 82
By Brightest Day 86
By Darkest Night 87
Choking Thirst 80
(The) Cliff Path 86
Conversations with a Dragon 91
Dragon Awareness 69
(The) Dragon Is Here! 86
(The) Dragon Watches 68
(The) Dragon's Eye 68
Dreadful Spells 94
Dreams of Fire 80, 86
Dwarf Ambush 84
Dwarven Assassin 77
Encountering Ginar 71
Encountering Skarf 74
Encounters 80
Entering the Watchtower 90
Epilogue 95
(The) Falling Block 94
(The) Fatted Goat 95
Fire Breath 93
(The) Gorge Route 86
Greystroke and Skirfira 67
(The) Growing Fires 69
(The) Haunted Lake 84
Hazards 79
Hearing Stories about Dragons 70
Hunt Episodes 70
Hunt Thresholds 69
Interaction 66, 74, 91
Introduction 66, 91
(The) King's Summons 65
Landslide! 86
(The) Last Homely House 71
Locations in the Tower 89
Lord Elstan 68
Lord Elstan's Grave 81
Lost in the Wastes 83
(The) Lost Knight 78
Maggots 79
Meeting the King 66
(The) Mountain Route 86
Nameless, The Elven Spear 88
(The) Nature of the Beast 64
No Way Forward 79
Not At Home 89
Orc Scouts 86
Orc-Sentries 85
(The) Orcs 94
(The) Other Guests 72
(The) Other Hunters 67
Part Five - Approaching the Watchtower 85
Part Four - A cross the New Desolation 79
Part One - Smoke on the Horizon 65
Part Seven - Slaying The Dragon 93
Part Six - By Stealth and Guile 89
Part Three - The Shadow of his Wings 72
Part Two - On Dragons 68
Perils 83
Playing Ukghash 83
Playing Raenar 91
Playing Wruenele 91
Possible Complications in the Battle 77
Potential Hazards 86
Preparing for the Journey 70
Raenar The Plunderer 92, 94, 95
Raging River 79
Raising Awareness 69
(A) Red Day, A Sword Day, To Die on 87
Resolution 75, 92
Rumour of the Lands 73
Running the Battle 95
Scorpion in the Bed 80
Secrets of Mazarbul 68
Seen By Orcs 80
Set Tolerance 66, 74, 91
(The) Shadow of the Past 89
Sinister Welcomes 74
Skarf, Lord of Brech 77
Slipping Out 76
Sneaking Around 90
Something Amiss 76
(A) Spear's Throw 87
Spotted! 85
Striking From Below 94
Tricks & Traps 94
Villainy Upon Villainy 73
Walking Stones 79
Warg-Tracks 86
Wasn't Raenar a Cold-drake? 65
Weak Spot 94
Wings 94
Witherfinger 81
Wruenele The Fiery 93, 94, 95

To Dungeons Deep 43
Adventurers, or Tomb-robbers? 57
Adventuring Phase 43
After the Battle 54
Ancestral Rights 61
(The) Attack 58
(The) Battle is On 52
(The) Bridge 56
Catching up with Domi 50
(The) Coat of Silver Mail 44
(A) Council 60
Cutthroats of the Dalelands 52
(The) Dawn Breaks 49
(The) Debate 62
(The) Decision 62
Divide and Conquer 51
Domi the Scholar 54
Dwalin's Conclusions 47
Dwalin the Warrior 47
(The) Entrance 55
Epilogue 63
Final Words? 49
Firbul, Snaga Tracker 52
Forgotten Secrets 44
Free the Prisoners 51
Goblins and Hobgoblins of
the Worst Description 50
Hazard Suggestions 48, 50
(The) Hidden Doors 56
(The) Hobgoblins 53
In the Nick of Time? 51
Inquisitive Dwarves 46
Interaction 46, 61
(The) Interrogation 47
Introduction 46, 60
(The) Journey Back 59
(The) Journey Begins 48
Keep them Bickering and Quarrelling 51
King Bard in 2959 44
(A) Long Shuddering Howl 49
Longo's Lieutenants 50
Magical Treasure Rolls 57
Outnumbered but not Outwitted 51
Part Five - Wings of Iron 58
Part Four - The Mausoleum 54
Part One - At the Court of the Grieving King 45
Part Six - Clouds Gather, Again 59
Part Three - Hunters in the Waste 49
Part Two - To the Grey Mountains Narrow 48
Out of the Forgotten North 58
Playing Thegn Jofur 45
(A) Plea for Help 45
(The) Royal Mausoleum 56
(The) Shadow of Fear 58
Secret Letters 43
Secrets Stolen 44
(The) Sepulchre 56
Set Tolerance 45, 60
Silent Vultures 58
(The) Straightest Path 59
Thegn Jofur 45
(The) Tomb 55
(A) Voice Filled with Evil and Horror 57

CONTINUE YOUR ADVENTURES WITH…





CUBICLE 7 SEVEN

www.cubicle7.co.uk